

PC ZONE

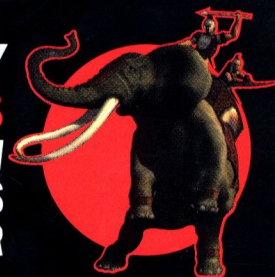
www.pczone.co.uk

£4.99 September 1997 ISSUE 54

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PC GAMES!

EVERYTHING YOU
NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
**DUNGEON
KEEPER**
PAGE 126

World First!
AGE OF EMPIRES
EXCLUSIVE REVIEW
OF MICROSOFT'S
CIV BEATER



WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

HEXEN II

QUAKE IN A CODPIECE...

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THE MOST FUN A BLOKE
CAN HAVE IN A DRESS

FIFA SOCCER MANAGER

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SOCCER
GAME TAKES ON CM2... AND FAILS

FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98

LOOKING FORWARD TO A
PROP-HEAD'S DREAM GAME

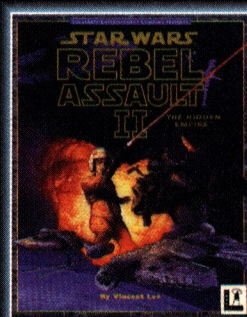
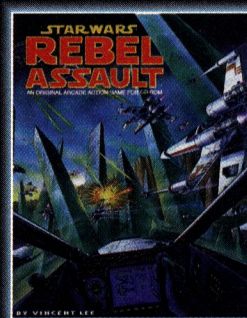
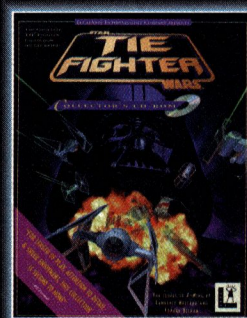
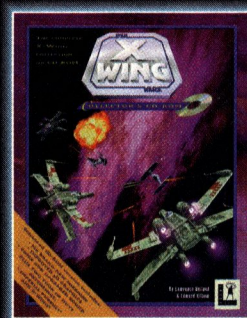
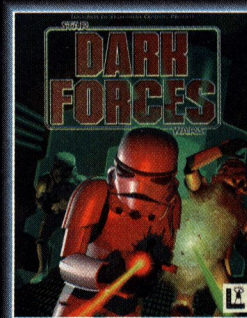


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BEANS ON LIONHEAD** See Page 36

T H E Y ' R E B A C K O N



THE WHITE LABEL



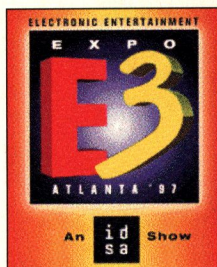
PC CD-ROM



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LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE 2



E3 Four pages into the magazine and already you're asking yourself, what the hell is all this 'E' business about? Is it a new 3D engine? Is it an all-new boy band? Is it made by Cadbury's? Turn to page 14 and all will be revealed...



STARCRAFT

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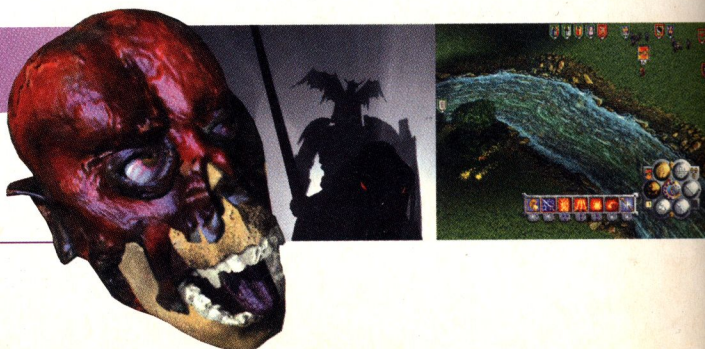
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WarHammer: Blood Omen 120

With *WarHammer 2* just around the corner, we chat to developers Mindscape and the creators, Games Workshop, about why this time it'll be worth the wait.





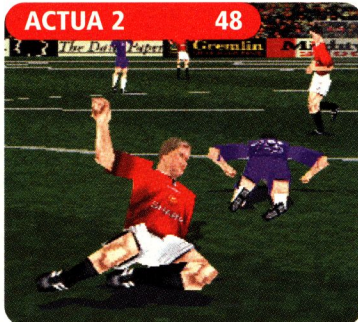
Hexen II

Turn to page 76 to find out why we think Raven's latest masterpiece is better than *Quake*.

RALLY 4 58



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AGE OF EMPIRES 94



TOTAL ANNIHILATION 62



FLIGHT SIM 98 56

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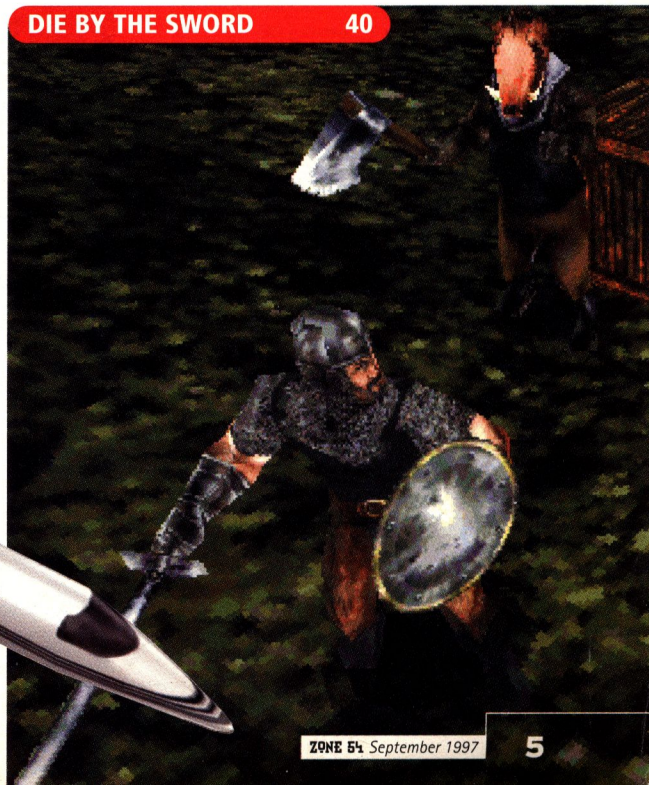


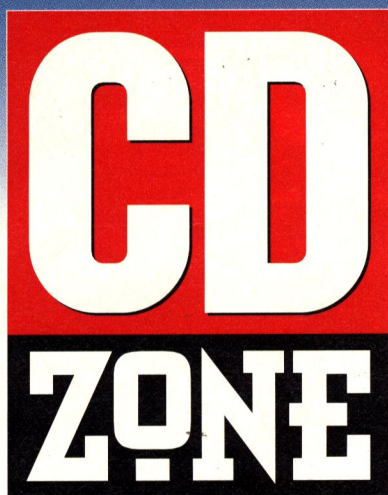
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DIE BY THE SWORD 40





Help!

The CD not working? HD playing up? The PC's being a total bast? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

HD DISK HELP

Phone Matthew on 01274 736990
Any weekday between 9am and 4pm

CD-ROM HELP

Phone ABT on 01708 250250
Any weekday between 11am and 6pm
(Please DO NOT phone the PC Zone office as your calls will NOT be answered)

If you are calling either helpline, then please take note of the following points:

- If possible have your PC operating and near to the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information ie system type, sound card, RAM etc, plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call to jot down the relevant info.

No CD?

If you are unable to get your grubby paws on the CD issue, then fear not! Simply fill out this slip, enclose your HD from the cover plus a cheque for a whole £1 and send it to:

**CD Exchange (50), PC Zone,
Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover St,
London W1P 7HJ**

Your details (please print clearly)

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Please make cheques payable to:

DENNIS PUBLISHING Ltd.

CDs from previous issues are also available.

On the disc

On this month's massive CD we've got more than 20 playable demos, as well as a whole host of patches, utilities and a special round-up of some of the best games currently available on the EA Classics label. To access the software on this month's CD Zone from Windows 95, pop the CD in the drawer and double-click on the CD icon

on your desktop. Simply double-click on the BROWSER.EXE file and this will launch the CD browser program, which will enable you to select and install this month's demos. If you're running your machine under DOS, change to your CD-ROM drive (the default command is usually <D:>). Type <PCZONE.EXE> to launch the browser.

Contents

- Click here to access the DOS demos on this month's CD
- Click here to view the cartoons and the Our Price chart
- Click here to see how some of the hottest new games are shaping up
- Click here to access the plethora of Windows demos on offer this month
- Click here to go back to the C:\ prompt and quit the CD

DOS Demos
Our round up the month's latest DOS games.

Windows
All the latest Windows and Windows 95 demos, Internet essentials and the top utilities that no PC should be without.

Regulars
Cartoons, competitions and more...

Hotshots
Take a look at what's hot from this year's E3 games expo in Atlanta, Georgia.

Installation shortcuts

If for some reason the front end to the CD won't run properly, you can still install each demo by bypassing the front end altogether.

For the DOS demos, select your CD drive (usually by typing D:) and type the installation line exactly as below.

For the Windows demos, select FILE, RUN from PROGRAM MANAGER or START, RUN from Windows 95, type your CD drive letter (usually D:) and then type the Installation line exactly as below.

For example, to run Acclaim's *Bust A Move 2* demo, just type the following:
Type D: (where your CD is D) <ENTER>
Type \DOSDEMOS\BAM2DEMO\GO_SMALL.EXE

Manual installation commands

Demo	Directory/installation line
Actua Club Soccer	DOSDEMOS\ACTUA\GO_SMALL.EXE
LBA 2	DOSDEMOS\LBA2\GO_SMALL.EXE
Super Bubble Mania	DOSDEMOS\MANIA\GO_SMALL.EXE
Legacy Of Kain	WINDEMOS\GAMEDEMO\KAIN\KAINDEMO.EXE
Machine Hunter	WINDEMOS\GAMEDEMO\HUNTER\MACHUNT.EXE
Premier Manager 97	WINDEMOS\GAMEDEMO\PM97\MANAGER.EXE
Poolster	WINDEMOS\GAMEDEMO\POOLSTER\SETUP.EXE
Microsoft Puzzles	WINDEMOS\GAMESEMO\PUZZLE\PUZZTRIAL.EXE
Super Puzzle Fighter 2	WINDEMOS\GAMEDEMO\SPF2\W_SPF2X.EXE
Time Warriors	WINDEMOS\GAMEDEMO\TIMEDEMO\START.EXE
Warlords 3	WINDEMOS\GAMEDEMO\WARLORDS\SETUP.EXE
Pacific General	WINDEMOS\GAMEDEMO\GENERAL\SETUP.EXE

Game Demos

- ACTUA SOCCER: CLUB EDITION
- LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE II
- SUPER BUBBLE MANIA
- TIME WARRIORS

EXTRA! EXTRA! EXTRA!

EA CLASSICS: BUDGET RANGE

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

You'll need at least a Pentium 75 with 8Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM. Many of the programs are designed to run under Windows 95, and as a result, some of them may require 16Mb RAM to run satisfactorily.

Where appropriate, we've included the minimum specifications as a guide to each individual game demo.

LBA 2: TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY

ELECTRONIC ARTS

THE ORIGINAL *LBA* HAD GAMERS THE WORLD over salivating at the sumptuous graphics and cutesome characters; indeed, it went on to claim a place in gaming history as an instant classic. Now, two years on, Twinsen is back and once again the planet Twinsun is under threat, and the people are relying on him to thwart the new menace.

LBA 2 uses a similar control method to the original game and is simplicity itself. Use the cursor keys to make Twinsen move, and the spacebar to make him talk, look, hit, jump and 'do' things. There are four different character modes and, depending on which one you've selected, Twinsen will do different things. To change mode, hold down the CONTROL KEY and use the left and right cursor keys to cycle through the menu. In 'Normal' mode, Twinsen will talk to other characters and look at objects as he walks up to them. In 'Sporty' mode, he'll run around like he's being chased by a hairy-backed sailor and he'll have the ability to leap bigger gaps.

'Aggressive' mode should be selected when you want to knock seven bags of brown stuff out of another character, while 'Discreet' mode is handy for sneaking past people you can't beat up, and for hiding in shady corners when you have to lie in wait.

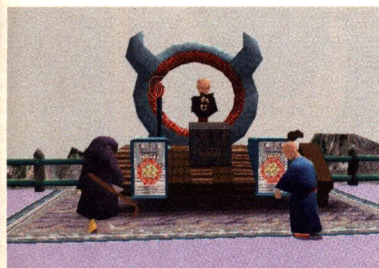
As in most games of this ilk, you can pick things up and keep them in your inventory to be used later (hot tip: pick up everything you can lay your hands on). You also need to spend time talking to as many characters as possible because it will help you gain an understanding of what's going on around you and will give you some handy tips too.

When in 'Aggressive' mode, try and get the first hit in, or you'll get pummelled. If you find yourself getting leathered, select 'Sporty' mode and leg it to safety. Bear in mind that Twinsen can push certain objects; you can also use the jetpack to get across large gaps or water. Use your projectile

weapon (pressing and holding ALT will make Twinsen hurl weird balls at his foes) only as a last resort, otherwise you'll run out of them. Finally, stay out of the water or you'll drown.

A full list of controls can be found within the game in the 'Options' menu. If you want to change the keyboard configuration or quit the game, press ESCAPE and select the appropriate option. Oh, and remember that his demo is only a small part of the whole game (which is massive), but in an effort to show you as many features as

possible, you'll automatically be transported to the same location whenever you attempt to enter a building.



CONTROLS:

Keyboard (default selection)

NB There is no need to install *LBA 2* as it will run directly from the CD.

KEYS

	Directional movement
	Action
	Select character mode
	Use weapon
	Map
	Access Options menu

PREMIER MANAGER 97

GREMLIN INTERACTIVE



PROMOTE YOURSELF TO ONE OF the most stressful jobs in the world (*That's nothing - you should try putting a magazine together - Ed.*) and manage your own club all the way to the top in Gremlin's latest version of the mega-selling *Premier Manager* soccer management sim. As well as selecting your squad and tactics, you'll actually be able to see your team perform on the pitch for the first time as they play out the match. To install *Premier Manager 97* to your hard drive, select the game from the browser and follow the on-screen instructions.



CONTROLS:
Mouse

ACTUA SOCCER CLUB EDITION

GREMLIN INTERACTIVE

THE BEST FOOTBALL GAME ON THE PC FROM GREMLIN HAS been given a bit of a wash and brush up, and now you can play as your favourite Premier League side. This demo allows you to play the first half of a friendly match between Manchester United and Newcastle United (just don't ask us why Shaka Hislop is white).



Once you've installed the game onto your hard drive, double-click on INSTALL.EXE to select your sound device and follow the on-screen instructions. You'll have to quit to DOS mode and change to the ACTUA directory before typing CLUB to run the game. If you run into difficulty, edit the README.TXT file. You can configure your joystick and redefine the keyboard controls by selecting the 'Environment' option from the main screen.



CONTROLS:

Keyboard/joystick

NB: You can use the numeric keypad arrows to alter the camera angle in 'Wire' camera mode. For a full list of keyboard controls, consult the README.TXT file.



Direction
Shoot/slide tackle/throw-in
Pass/tackle/chest ball
Options menu
Low/hi-res mode
Pause match/quit

BLOOD OMEN: LEGACY OF KAIN

ACTIVISION



CHECK OUT OUR MASSIVE ONE-LEVEL PLAYABLE DEMO OF THE huge PlayStation hit from Activision. You are Kain, a murder victim who returns as a vampire. You are destined to walk the Earth in darkness, seeking vengeance and sucking the lifeblood out of innocent victims in order to stay alive. You have magical powers and spells at your disposal, and you can pick up potions and weapons as you navigate your way around the level to help you in your quest. Your mighty broad sword is your weapon of choice, and you must kill or be killed. If you venture outside, be sure to be inside a building under cover of darkness before the sun comes up – or it's curtains. Similarly, stay away from anyone who's wearing a crucifix (ie Madonna) or has just been to Pizza Hut and had a side order of garlic bread with extra cheese as a starter.

Controlling Kain is easy: simply use the cursor keys to make him move, and Ctrl and Alt to attack and suck the blood of your victims. A full list of keyboard controls can be accessed via the Option menus, which you can bring up at any time in the game by pressing F7.



CONTROLS:

Keyboard (default selection)

KEYS



Directional movement
Attack
Action/suck blood
Use prepared spell
Weapons, spell and armour inventory
Spell quick menu
Objects quick menu
Camera zoom in/zoom out
Eagle-eye map
Options screen
Cycle through gamma settings
Switch resolution mode (as available)
Quit game

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER 2 TURBO

(CAPCOM/VIE)



AN INNOVATIVE NEW slant on two popular genres, *Super Puzzle Fighter 2 Turbo* is a weird *Tetris* come *Street Fighter* hybrid that soon becomes devilishly addictive, especially when played in two-player mode, head to head. Once you've selected your characters, start matching the coloured blocks as they fall down the screen to batter your opponent. You can also reconfigure the keyboard controls, if you so wish, by selecting 'Option' from the main screen. If the game runs slowly full-screen, try running it in a window to speed it up.

CONTROLS: Keyboard (default selection)

NB: Try running the game in a window if it runs slowly.

COMMAND	PLAYER ONE	PLAYER TWO
Up	[E]	[↑]
Down	[X]	[↓]
Left	[S]	[←]
Right	[D]	[→]
Turn1 L	[N]	[4] (keypad)
Turn1 R	[M]	[6] (keypad)
Turn2 L	[H]	[7] (keypad)
Turn2 R	[J]	[9] (keypad)
Start	[Y]	[1]
Select	[U]	[3]

Atlantis

The Lost Tales

Don't forget
your passport...
...the local
authorities are
particularly
nasty.

PC Review:

"Drooled over Atlantis? Don't bother wiping yourself down.
Instead drool over it some more..."

"Atlantis mixes Cryo's trademark stunning visuals and
dreamlike atmosphere with new cuttingedge technology."

Featuring



technology

Distributed by

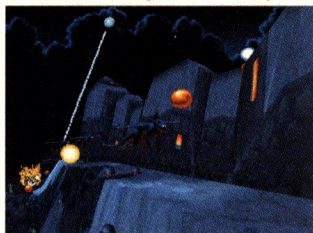


ELECTRONIC ARTS™



ELECTRONIC ARTS CLASSICS SELECTION

THIS MONTH WE'VE COMPILED A SPECIAL SECTION ON THE CD THAT'S PACKED WITH PLAYABLE DEMOS OF JUST some of the games available at a special price under the EA Classics banner. All the demos in this section were designed to run under DOS, so if you're using Windows 95 you'll have to quit to DOS mode before running them on your machine. If you need more info in any of these games, edit the README.TXT file that accompanies each game.

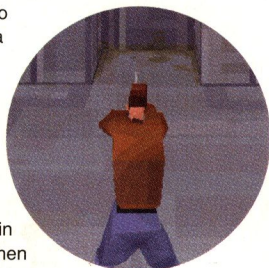


Magic Carpet 2

The sequel to the classic carpet caper from Bullfrog benefited from in-game help and an even smoother feel. It still stands up as a classic today, so test run this demo and find out why it's a game you'll find yourself going back to again and again.

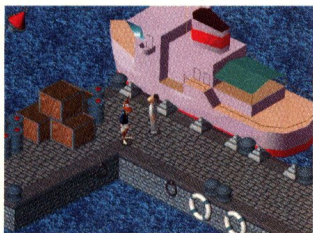
Fade To Black

The pseudo sequel to *Flashback*, *Fade To Black* represented a landmark in games development, with a marked presence of fast-paced shooting action and intuitive puzzle-solving. Load this up and you'll be counting the days 'til *Flashback 3*.



Little Big Adventure

One of the most exquisitely crafted adventure games ever released, *LBA* had the gaming press in



raptures when it appeared two years ago. Even though the gorgeous sequel has since been released, the original is nevertheless a classic and should not be missed.

NHL 96

The years keep ticking by and the games just



get better and better. This version of the popular ice hockey title features improved graphics and sound,



plus a smoother engine. To date, it has only been superseded by the full price *NHL 97*.

Theme Park

One of the biggest-selling games of all time, *Theme Park* brought a whole new satirical slant to the resource management genre. With cutesome graphics and innovative features, it's a must-have. Play it and discover why.

System Shock

Another classic that's just begging for the sequel treatment. *System Shock* scored a whopping 95 per cent when we reviewed it way back in November 1994 and soon gained the accolade of the 'thinking man's *Doom*'. Still to be bettered in the strategy/shoot 'em up stakes.

Time Commando

A hybrid of exploration and beat 'em up action, the exquisitely animated *Time Commando* is as pretty as they come. What it lacks in depth, it makes up for with lush graphics and presentation. It's now available for just £14.99 and is a must for fans of the traditional beat 'em up.

Advanced Tactical Fighters

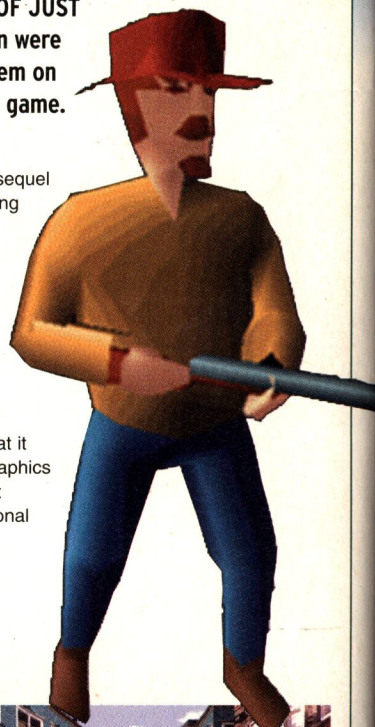
ATF scored a massive 92 per cent when we reviewed it back in March 1996, and is a priority buy for flight sim fans looking for something a little different in the air-to-air combat stakes. The full game sports an interactive reference guide, courtesy of *Jane's*, and a comprehensive mission builder.

Road Rash

This frenetic motorcycle racer was championed as the best game ever written for the now defunct 3DO, and the PC conversion is certainly a valuable addition to anyone's games' library. It's got bikes and fighting in it – what more could you want?

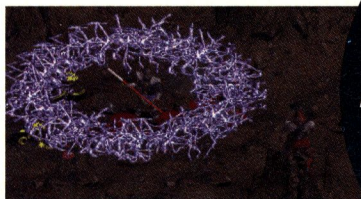
Speed Haste

This F1/stock car racing hybrid is a neat little arcade racer that's quite playable even on low-spec machines. It might not stand comparison with the graphical excellence and detail of *Screamer* or *F1GP2*, but at a reduced price, it's definitely worth a look.



CD ZONE EXTRA

WE'VE GOT OVER 20 PLAYABLE DEMOS ON THIS MONTH'S CD, including the excellent *Time Warriors*, *Warlords 3*, *Pacific General* and *Super Bubble Mania*. There's also a whole host of patches and utilities, including the now infamous *Carmageddon* 'Gore Patch' and patches for *Blood* and *Diablo*. For further details, load up the browser and click your way through the menu to see what's what and where it's at.

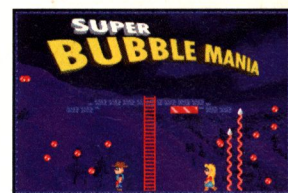


COMING NEXT MONTH IN PC ZONE!

In the October issue of *PC Zone* magazine we've got WORLD EXCLUSIVE reviews of LucasArts' *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces 2*, Microsoft's *Flight Sim 98*, *War Hammer 2* from Mindscape, *Rally 4* from Europress and The Logic Factory's *Tone Rebellion*. PLUS! On next month's CD we've got massive playable demos of *Jedi Knight*, *Hexen 2*, *Rally 4* and *Tone Rebellion*. You simply cannot afford to miss it. The October issue of *PC Zone* will be on sale on 4 September from all good newsagents.

HD ZONE

ON THIS MONTH'S floppies we've got *Super Bubble Mania*, a variant on the old classic *Super Pang* and *Poolster*, a top-down pool game.



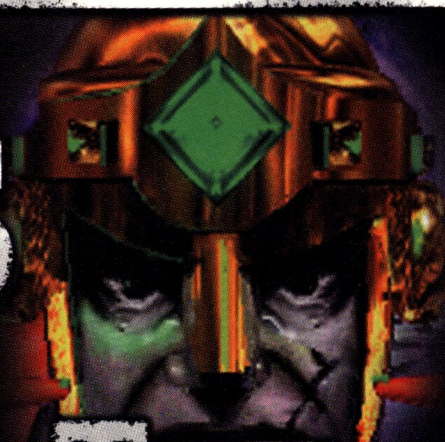
To load and access the software on this month's floppies, insert the floppy into your disk drive, double-click on the floppy icon and type ZONE. Follow the instructions to install the game onto your hard drive. If you have any problems or require further information, edit the README.TXT file.

Wargods™

PRESENTS
THE ULTIMATE 3D COMBAT



Vs



KABUKI JO

TAK

FEARED MEDIEVAL SAMURAI

AVENGER OF A LOST CIVILISATION



Vs



VALLAH

A VIKING GODDESS

PAGAN

A MISTRESS OF THE BLACK ARTS

WARHEAD Vs

A SUPER-HUMAN FIGHTER

CY-5

AN ADVANCED CYBORG



Vs



ANUBIS

HIS SOUL IS CURSED

MAXIMUS

A MIGHTY GLADIATOR

AHAU KIN Vs

AN EVIL HIGH PRIEST

VOODOO

GOD OF THE UNDEAD



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BULLETIN

New Blood add-on

Those on-the-ball dudes at WizardWorks have announced a new add-on pack for their killer hit *Blood*, literally in the space of

DATA PAD

What's new! What it looks like! When it's out!

The Electronic Entertainment Expo



Pick up any current computer games mag and you'll see the same thing inside every single one of them: "E!", "E!", "E!". Sounding more like a chorus of pushers outside a dance tent at a festival than the media discussing computer games, 'E' is currently the 'in vogue' word for most of the software industry – simply *everyone* is talking about it (dahling).

The Electronic Entertainment Expo (E³ for short)

ran from 19 to 21 June in Atlanta, Georgia, as a showcase for every single game being developed in the civilised (hah) world, across every format known to man (even including 3DO).

It was the PC though, that garnered the most emphatic praise at the show, with numerous PC developers demonstrating a plethora of jaw-dropping titles. Almost everyone had hardware accelerated games on display, and people were almost falling over themselves, desperate to get

a first glimpse at the major new announcements.

Like the recent Atlanta Olympics, E³ was of similar scope and scale (the main exhibition hall apparently being the size of six football pitches) and at times it felt wildly out of control in the searing Atlanta heat. For the most part though, E³ was a delirious race from stand to stand, Lazer Tag-style, grabbing every possible scrap of information, every exclusive screenshot and every new announcement that was going. And, by 'eck, there was a lot of it... **Z**

Second coming of Shiny



Witnesses report first sighting of the new Messiah – on Laguna Beach, California!

Undoubtedly the most talked about game at the recent E³ show in Atlanta last month was *Messiah*, from Laguna-based developers Shiny.

Although it's still very early on in development, the technology on display was undeniably awesome. In a 'behind closed doors' presentation made by Shiny head honcho Dave Perry, a select few were treated to a sneak look at their amazing new 3D engine that can effortlessly throw highly detailed, exquisitely animated characters around the screen with consummate prowess. (Needless to say they'll probably dine out on that for months to come, too.)

The new technology, which draws on complex real-time tessellation,



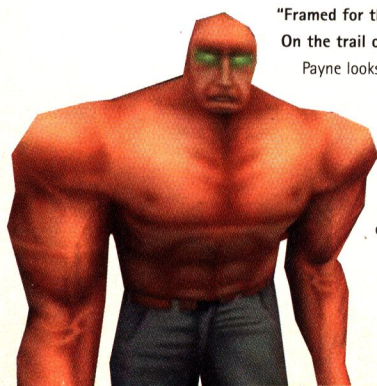
deformation and interpolation techniques, is to be used for the first time in *Messiah*, a highly innovative game that prompts the player to assume the character of a baby angel, sent down to Earth to clean things up. Being a baby, he's pretty defenceless, but he does have the ability to possess and take over up to 60 other characters to help him in his quest to banish evil from the world. Unfortunately, there's also an evil angel who's doing his best to mess things up. Only when the player has amassed enough powers and experience (through solving various puzzles) will they meet for a final showdown and will goodness ever be restored to the world.

Check out Shiny's Website (www.shiny.com) for more info on this extraordinarily original game which is scheduled for release early next year. **Z**

Live life to the Max

"Framed for the murder of his boss. Out to revenge his slaughtered family. On the trail of a horde of murdering mobsters..." Undercover detective Max Payne looks certain to have his hands full in his eponymously titled debut, currently on target for an explosive early '98 release through 3D Realms and GT.

Max Payne is slated as a "hard-boiled 3D game that is focused on straightforward, violent, heart-stopping action". Featuring drug-enhanced killers, four characters to play, and an emphasis on realism, it won't be a game for the nippers to get hold of.



The game's developers, Remedy Entertainment, are using their own 'Exit' 3D technology, which excels in the 'real-time shadowing' and '16-bit coloured radiosity lighting' departments. The third-person environment will be fully destroyable (as in: bits fly off if you shoot the walls and stuff), there'll also be full 3D card support and a flexible level editor available at the time of release. **Z**



a few weeks after the game's initial roll-out. "We're currently creating add-on levels that will equal or rival those of the host title," said GT Interactive's Paige Carlson as the first details of *Cryptic Passage* were made

public at a press conference in Atlanta. Featuring exclusive new levels, textures, art and maps, *Cryptic Passage* expands on the original *Blood* storyline in a search for a scroll "capable of upsetting the balance of

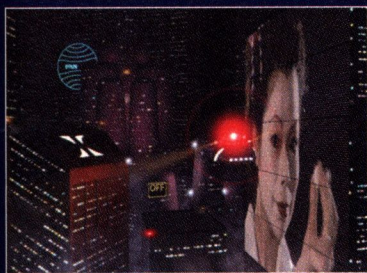
power in the underworld", which has been stolen and must be returned to its place of origin. Graveyard, mountain pass, docks (hello sailor!), abandoned mine shafts, and all manner of other levels have been

mentioned, as well as the obligatory new weapons and power-ups. To play *Cryptic Passage* you'll first need to own the full registered version of *Blood*, which is well worth investing in, believe us.



Time to die

Ridley Scott's acclaimed sci-fi epic finally makes a long-awaited appearance on the PC.



Now where would any *Blade Runner* news item be without this shot? Nowhere.

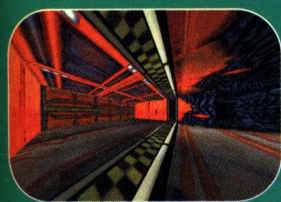
Those of you who regularly dream of electric sheep, or want to hang by your fingertips from a tall building while a sneering robot leers down at you will want to check out *Blade Runner*, Westwood Studios' new 3D adventure, based on the cult sci-fi movie of the same name. And Donning Deckard's legendary trenchcoat, you take on the role of both the hunter and the hunted, stalking the streets of Los Angeles in the year 2019. However, *Blade Runner* will also feature a unique spin on the traditional plot, in which the player chooses whether to either hunt down rogue Replicants, or become a 'skin job' themselves, as they search for a vital missing DNA sequence which will lengthen their allotted span.

Featuring over 130 digitally recreated sets from the film, *Blade Runner* will be jam-packed onto a mammoth four CDs and should be hitting your screens some time in November. **Z**



Exquisite pre-rendered graphics are Westwood Studios' forte, as you can see right here.

Alien Vs Predator... exclusive shots!



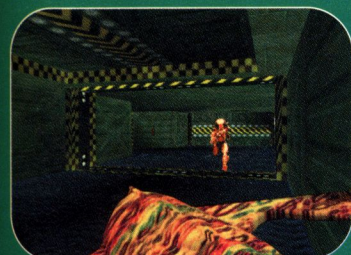
The aliens get to spit, and, kids, we all know that spitting's cool.

remember that its origins date back to the ill-fated Atari Jaguar. And surely that can only be a bad thing?

Well... no. Oxford-based developers Rebellion (who produced the Jag cart) have completely re-engineered the whole thing and transformed it from a rather flash-looking *Doom* clone into a sci-fi *Quake*-like with recognisable monsties... as our new and never-before-seen screenshots can bear witness.

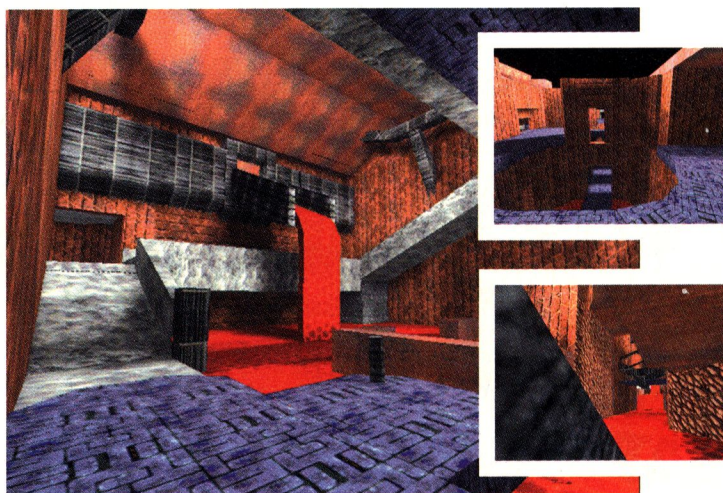
For those of you unaware of the plot, the action takes place on a huge multi-levelled space hulk thing and involves three different factions: the Aliens, who are hooked onto the underbelly of the hulk; the Predators, who are docked up at the top; and the human marines, who lived there in the first place. You can choose to play any of these three character styles and the gameplay and user interface alters accordingly. Overall it's a bit of a blast fest, but at a somewhat more sedate pace than *Quake* and its minions. However,

it does have the added advantage of allowing multi-player games where you can log on as any of the three races. Expect to see *AvP* in the shops early next year. **Z**



Those marines don't stand a blummen chance do they?

Prey looking impressive



Prepare, ladies and gentlemen, for the graphical event of the decade.

Prey, currently in development at Texas-based 3D Realms, was demonstrated to a select crowd at the recent E3 show in Atlanta and immediately began to stir up a considerable amount of excitement.

The game, which will focus on the character of Talon Brave (a modern era Apache Indian thrown into a titanic struggle with a mysterious trinity of alien species), will utilise 3D Realm's 'Portal Technology' engine - a stunningly 'different' way of doing things which has allowed the game's designers to 'break' the rules of space/time, giving them the freedom to be wildly creative in their level design. Developed for accelerator cards only, *Prey* is something of a graphical *tour de force*, with stunning 16-bit coloured lighting, transparency, fog and all that sort of stuff. Trust us - when you see it, you won't believe it.

Prey will also be released with a comprehensive Portal Technology editor called *Preditor* (sic), which will allow players to build their own super-complex levels with ease and style.

For more information, take yourself off to www.3drealms.com. **Z**

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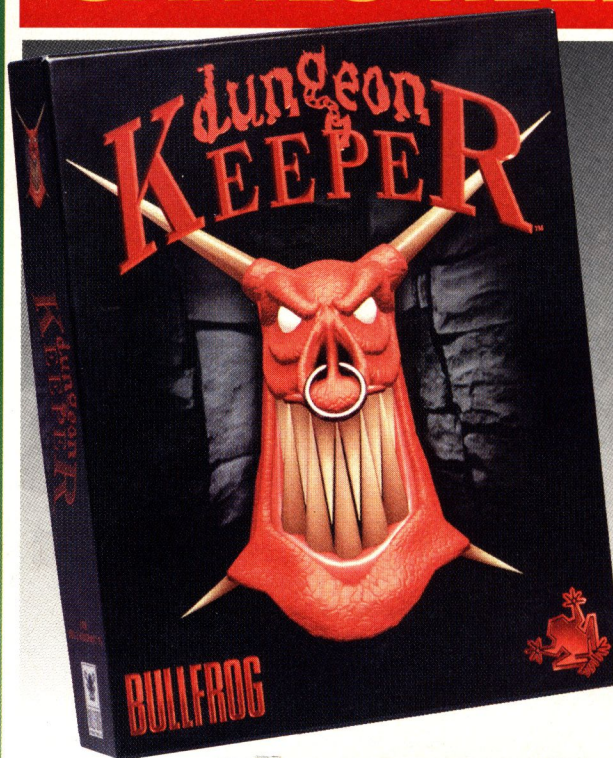
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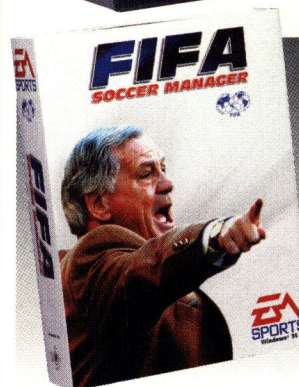
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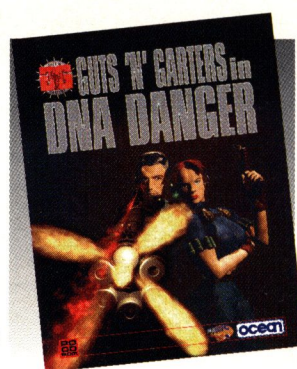
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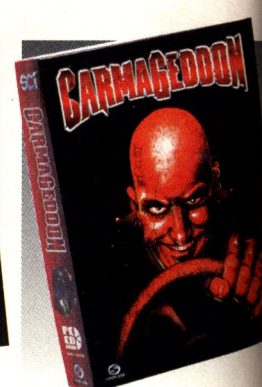
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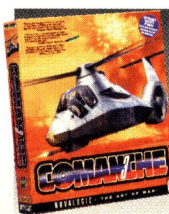
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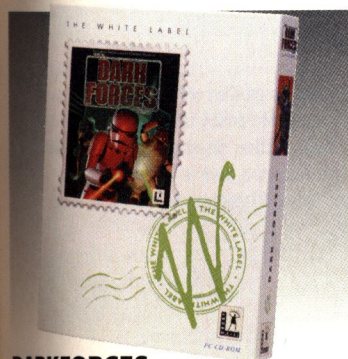


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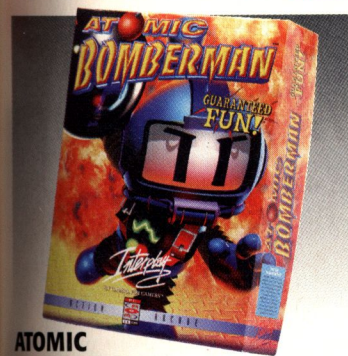


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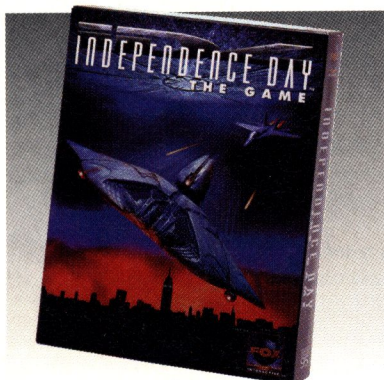
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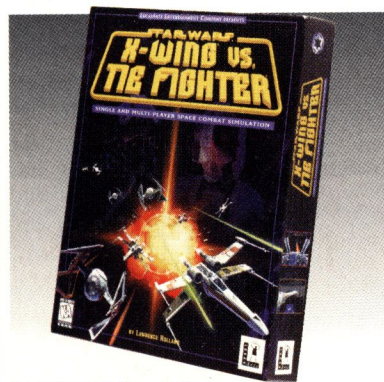
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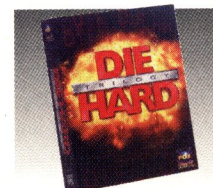
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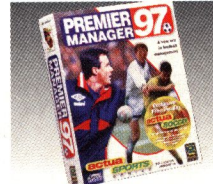
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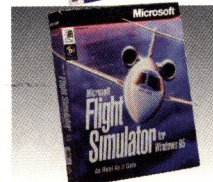
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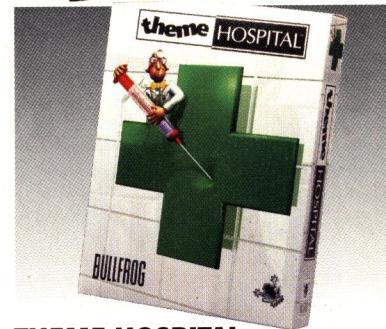
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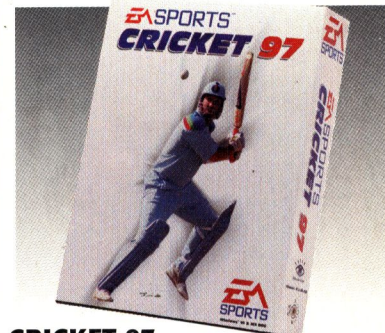


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Microsoft lure Roberts

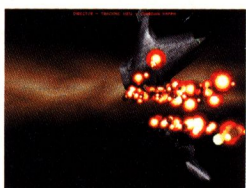
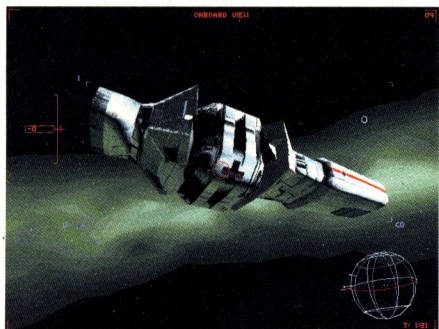
Chris Roberts, creator of the best-selling *Wing Commander* series, has left Origin Systems to form his own company, Digital Anvil. Several

big publishers apparently showed interested in publishing Digital Anvil, but Microsoft have beaten them all to it by signing Digital on a deal said to be worth millions of dollars to Chris and his new team. Chris has taken his brother Erin on board for the



DATA PAD

Come back Bob Wakelin!



(Above and left) *Darklight Conflict* meets *Privateer 2* in Ocean's *Infinity War*.

Ocean Software have had their fair share of problems recently, but they now seem to be getting their act together again. Phew.

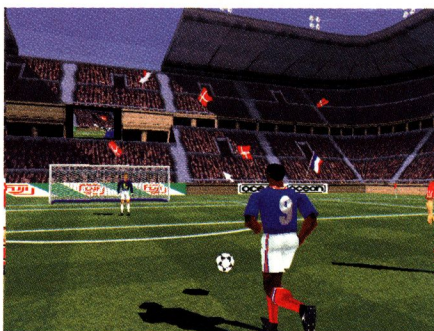
It's all happening at Ocean, a company which is positively awash with news of forthcoming titles.

Número uno is *Silver*, a wholesome adventure which is set in a gothic world that has been ruled for a millennium by the mysterious titular sorcerer. With over 300 locations and the ability to control

several of the five main characters simultaneously, it should provide welcome respite from those perennial "Thief, fighter or magician?" decisions.

UEFA certainly looks set to be one of the more impressive footie releases of the year, if these stunning shots are anything to go by. Officially licensed, with shedloads of teams, players and even stadia from the beautiful game, *UEFA* reputedly boasts "more frames of animation" than any rival on the market, which sounds extremely promising. However, we'll hold judgement until we've seen how it plays.

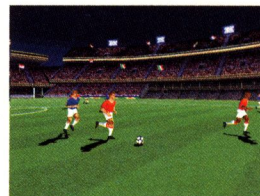
Developed by Sheffield-based Particle Systems, the brooding *Infinity War* places you at the helm of a hefty 10,000 ton 'Infinity' class corvette in a comprehensive starship simulation which guarantees a "free universe inside every box". Particle Systems candidly admit to have scoffed over £6,000 worth of pizzas during the development of *Infinity War* (fat sods), but, greasy keyboard problems or not,



Big title for Ocean: Gothic graphic adventure *Silver*.

they confidently assure us that they will have the game finished in time for a November release.

There's also been further news on *Viper*, the 3D helicopter blaster from the people responsible for the megastatic *Tunnel B1*. Neon are now promising "vividly realistic cityscapes", "relentless blasting action" and even free post-traumatic stress disorder, as the tale of one man and his helicopter against the rabid alien hordes grows increasingly nearer completion. *Viper* is due out before the end of the year, as is the aforementioned *Silver*. Z



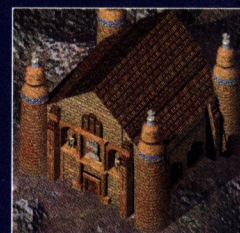
If we were betting men, we'd have money on Ocean's *UEFA* eventually taking top spot in the charts. But we're not, so we won't.

Interplay licence to print money

It looks as though the recently acquired TSR licence is finally being put to good use, thanks to developers Bioware whose obvious love of the genre is ensuring that *Forgotten Realms: Baldur's Gate* is shaping up very nicely indeed.

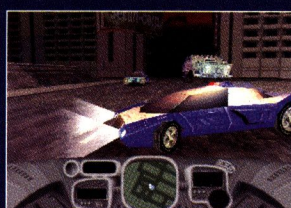
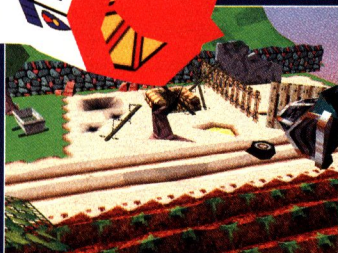
The blend of lush, hi-res pre-rendered environments, crisp character animation and real-time combat, all seamlessly woven into the fabric of the enormously popular TSR universe, are enough to indicate that Richard Garriot & Co will have a fight on their hands early next year, when both *Baldur's Gate* and *Ultima IX* are scheduled for release – that is, providing the guys at Bioware can convince their publishers that a multi-player option is a must.

Due for release before Christmas smacks us on the forehead is a bunch of titles including *MAX 2*, which now boasts real-time combat, 16-bit graphics, variable terrain and a six-way multi-player facility. There'll also be *Crime Killer*, a pseudo-futuristic, Mad Maxian affair that casts the player in the role of a patrol cop who must rid the city of rioting scum



TSR licensed adventures return in *Baldur's Gate*.

by any means possible – which presumably means road rage and stunt action a-plenty. The developers are citing a frame rate of 60fps and a whole heap of effects and weapons, so who knows, it could potentially be a *Carmageddon* killer. However, we'll reserve our opinions until we see some code. Z



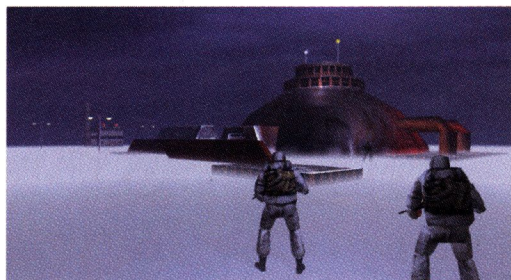
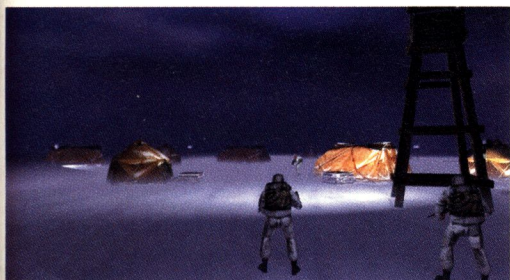
(Left to right) *EW Jim 3D: Mario64* (and acid) influenced, *Crime Killer*: rid city of scum, *MAX 2*: a rabbit. Why? Dunno.

new project (Erin has worked on *Strike Commander* and the *Privateer* series) and Tony Zurovec (creator of *Crusader* for EA). Chris is keeping very quiet indeed about the projects Digital are working on, although he did hint at the possibility of a *Wing Commander*-style combat sim with extensive on-line options

appearing at the end of next year. We'll bring you more news on Digitals' plans as and when we get it. Digital Anvil's Website, as you may have noticed if you've ever been there (www.digitalanvil.com), is currently 'arse'. So contact Microsoft Connection on 0345 002000 for more information.



BMG deploy Special Ops



Not, as you would expect, a surgical training device, or a sign at the local clap clinic, *Special Ops* is in fact a high-octane, action-oriented 3D shoot 'em up based on the real-life military activities of the Special Forces (*Crack US army rangers, don't you know* – Ed.).

Whether that'll involve nonchalantly slitting the throat of some poor hapless night watchmen as you infiltrate an enemy camp (like they do in the movies) has yet to be confirmed. Gameplay in *Special Ops* will be outdoor-based by design, and Zombie – the development

team behind the game – are telling everyone who'll listen that their 3D environments, constructed using their new 'Viper' graphics technology, will be the best we've ever seen.

Head off to www.zombie.com if you'd like to know more. **Z**

HOT Line

Tracking the hottest games and their current release dates

T I M E L I N E

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

JANUARY '98

FEBRUARY '98

MARCH '98

APRIL '98

MAY '98

Actua Soccer 2 (Gremlin)
Flight Sim 98 (Microsoft)
Jedi Knight (LucasArts)
Monkey Island 3 (LucasArts)
Populous 3 (EA)

Starcraft (Sierra)
Total Annihilation (GT Interactive)
Unreal (GT Interactive)

HEDZ (Hasbro)
Earthsiege 3 (Sierra)
Quake 2 (id)
Rally 4 (Europress)
Tomb Raider 2 (Core Design)

Blade Runner (Westwood Studios)
Daikatana (Eidos Interactive)
Grand Theft Auto (BMG Interactive)
Tanktics (BMG Interactive)

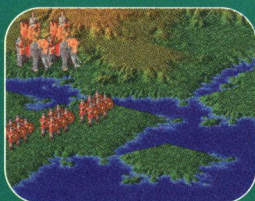
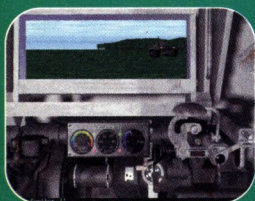
The Dark Project (Eidos Interactive)
Falcon 4.0 (Publisher TBA)
Star Trek: First Contact (MicroProse)

Duke Nukem Forever (GT Interactive)
FIGP3 (TBC)
SimCity 3000 (Maxis)
Sin (Activision)
Ultima IX (EA)

Sentinel Returns (Psygnosis)
The X-Files (Fox Interactive)

Aliens Vs Predator (Fox Interactive)
Messiah (Interplay)

Prey (GT Interactive)



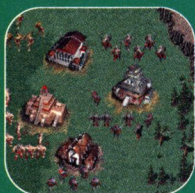
(Far left to right) Tank sim *iPanzer44*, war sim *Great Battles Of Hannibal* and sci-fi jobbie *Project Miqomeq*.

Interactive Magic have Ambition

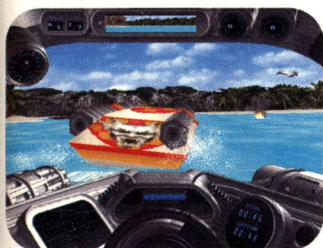
Our good friend 'Wild Bill' Stealey has been cracking the whip over at Interactive Magic recently, if their latest press release is anything to go by. A massive five brand new, previously unannounced titles are due from the North Carolina-based company before Christmas – all, as you would expect, simulation and strategy games (which are of course what Interactive Magic do best).

On the strategy side of things, there are three titles on the way. *Ambition* is a real-time strategy game of empire building, where you are King and where any of your actions evoke serious consequences. The second title in the *Great Battles* range, *Great Battles Of Hannibal*, is en route and follows on from where *Great Battles Of Alexander* left off. Finally, *Project Miqomeq* is a sci-fi strategy wargame with strong multi-player elements. All three titles should be available some time in the autumn.

In the realm of all things simulation, I-Magic will be releasing *iPanzer 44* in November, the sequel to *iM1A2 Abrams*, as well as *Fighter Ops*, which is a cut-down version of their successful on-line flight combat sim *WarBirds*. **Z**



(Above left) *Ambitious Ambition*. (Above) *F-f-f-Fighter Ops*.



Telstar making waves

Telstar Electronic Studios have acquired Criterion Studios' forthcoming high-speed boat racing game *AquaTak*, renaming it *Powerboat GT* and announcing an early September release date.

This will no doubt be of interest to Interplay, who have their own high-speed boat racing game, *F1 Powerboat*, set on course for a September release as well.

Telstar's *Powerboat GT* does do things a little bit differently, though. For starters, every boat is armed to the teeth with an array of hi-tech weaponry, and the ability to shoot at each other does tend to spice things up somewhat. *Powerboat GT* will have ten different tracks (each with a number of 'secret bits'), day, night and fog conditions, five different boats to race in, a six-player network option, full Direct3D support and MMX enhancements. Crikey, how on earth can we possibly handle all that suspense? **Z**

CHARON

K'LHANNA

PRA'MIN

PERFECT ASSASSIN

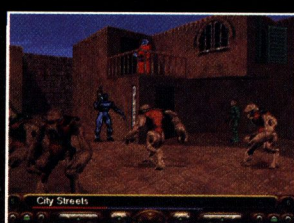
"...PERFECT ASSASSIN COULD WELL HAVE BEEN THE NEXT ULTIMA
PC

"IT'S KEV'S SKILLS WITH A PENCIL AND HIS
FANTASTIC IMAGINATION THAT SUGGESTS
WILL BE ONE HELL OF A GAME..."
PC GAMER

"... A PLOT THAT'S GOT
TURNS IN IT THAN
COW'S INTESTINES

"...THE KILLER GAME FOR '97
PLAYSTATION PS

THE POINT WHEREA



GROLIER INTERACTIVE

CREATED BY MIKE

STANLEY

ARCHON

ROCHAN

DAH'MON TARG

PERFECT ASSASSIN

POWERED BY GROLIER INTERACTIVE

WHAT GAP
AND "FORCE."
PC ZONE

INDIBLE,
PERFECT ASSASSIN

IT TWISTS AND
NARROWLY
PLAY

REALITY AND ANNIHILATION COLLIDE.

WE PRESENT PERFECT ASSASSIN A VERITAS PRODUCTION

EVERYWHERE DEVELOPED BY SYNTHETIC DIMENSIONS

BRUNO ARON AS THE PERFECT ASSASSIN



GROLIER INTERACTIVE



Braben works on a Virus

Infamous programmer David Braben has announced he's to update his '80s action classic *Virus* and give it a fresh '90s style makeover.

Virus 2000 is a sort of 3D *Defender* game which takes place over a series of rolling isometric landscapes that are under chemical attack from invading aliens. The player's task is to destroy these dastardly little intruders before

the worlds are contaminated beyond repair. Also rumoured to be on the way is a third sequel to *Elite*, although so far a publisher has yet to be named for either game. Keep an eye on www.pczoo.co.uk for further announcements.

DATA PAD

EA at E³



Electronic Arts' reputation as a prolific publisher strengthens at the Electronic Entertainment Expo.

Electronic Arts' presence at E³ was strong this year, as anticipated. Everything exhibited drew large crowds – from the impressive *Populous 3* through to the latest and greatest *Madden* update.

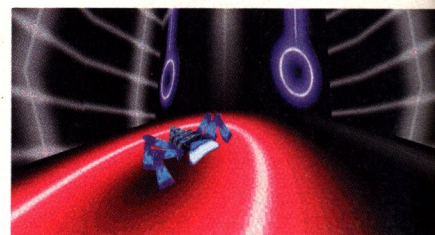


(Above) *Wing Commander* returns. (Above right) *Nuclear Strike*: hard as nails sequel to *Soviet Strike*.



Trippy imagery and fiendish puzzles – *Galapagos* looks like a cross between a night in *Stringfellows* and a bad *Fifth Element*-style flashback. Watch out for a full preview in a forthcoming issue.

A host of new games were unveiled too, including *Galapagos* (working title) – a brain-teasing 3D action game with Escher-like puzzles. It's based in a dangerous environment, where up and down have no meaning and where rivers of iridescent acid and high-energy laser mines are beautiful, but deadly, artefacts of some other time.



Coming up too is *Nuclear Strike*, the sequel to *Soviet Strike*, in which combatants are dropped into the jungles of Southeast Asia in a fight to stop a madman holding the world to ransom with a nuclear device. *Wing Commander Prophecy*, Origin's fifth title in the series, looked as visually impressive as its predecessors but will have a different gameplay style. Also in the pipeline is *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* – a 3D action game, packed with biological perils, based on the motion picture of the same name.

EA Sports were also showing off a selection of new games – most of them updates of existing brands such as *NHLA* ('98), *PGA (Tour Pro)* and *FIFA (Road To The World Cup)*. That said, there were other titles, such as *Andretti Racing* (which mixes Indy and Stock Car competition), and the announcement of an officially-licensed *NASCAR* racing game that helped keep the EA locker room fresh from bad odours.

Most of EA's E³ catalogue will see the light of day before Christmas, so we'll have in-depth previews of the best stuff in the very near future. **Z**

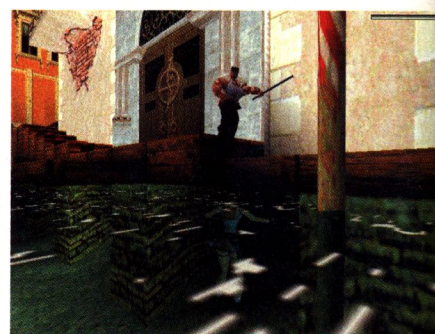
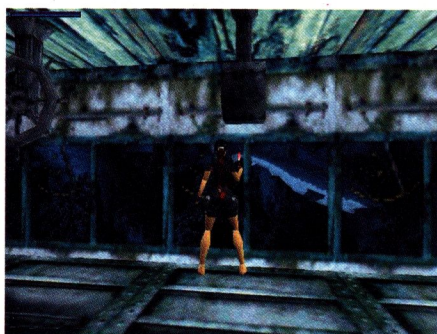
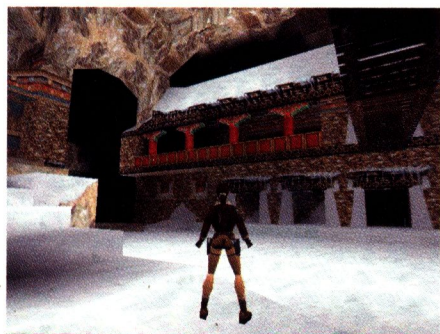
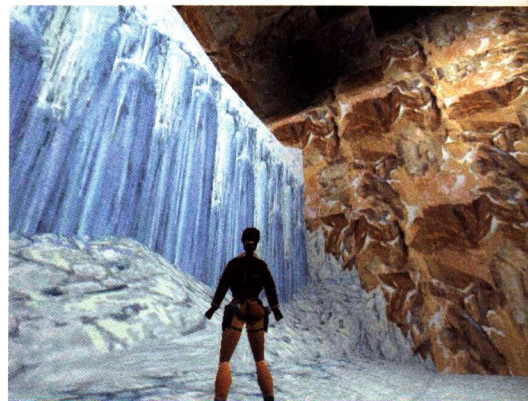
STOP PRESS: Brand new Tomb Raider 2 shots!



Just as we were going to press, and after exhausting Eidos' resources of pictures for our supplement this month, we came across these... You've seen Lara in her little shorts and you may even have seen her nude, if you're sad enough to check out the site on the Net, but have you seen her in a wetsuit before? Here it is. The oft-talked about, but never-before-seen scuba gear. Complete with short, tight-fitting, er, shorts – obviously.

If that's not enough for you, we also have some shots of Lara in her new jacket (she feels the cold these days) and some of the new environments that we haven't had the opportunity to show you before. These shots have been taken from an early 3Dfx build of the software and hence are in SVGA and 16-bit colour – so the glass in the shark tank is transparent, and all of the textures in the environment are fully anti-aliased to look extra silky smooth.

Next month we'll be bringing you even more shots, along with as much information as we can lay our hands on about the game that is virtually guaranteed to go straight to number one when it's released on 17 November. Start counting the days... **Z**



Larry Holland's pet project

Lawrence Holland, the man best known for his work on LucasArts' range of popular *Star Wars* combat simulators, has revealed his plans for

Eldorado, the working title of a game he's been beavering at for a number of years, based on his knowledge of archaeology and anthropology. Set in the age of exploration, *Eldorado* is in some ways similar to *Colonization*, but it's in real time

instead of being turn-based, and a handy first-person viewpoint will this time take preference over the usual map-based nonsense. No shots have been seen as yet, so we've got no indication as to how it's shaping up.


It's doubtful that Holland will use technology currently available in recent LucasArts games. Holland is now talking to other publishers because a historical strategy game does not fit in with LucasArts' overall gameplan.

Jane's got a new chopper

Fans of EA's Jane's AH-64D Longbow will be pleased to hear a sequel has now been announced, which is due for release some time this autumn.

New features include the ability to fly multiple types of helicopter, such as the strangely-domed Kiowa Scout and the monolithic Blackhawk (a dynamic campaign engine that's capable of starting a new war every time you fly) and enhanced multi-player action.

On the technical front, the graphics boast incredible new levels of photo-realism (with up to four times the detail of the first game), dynamic lighting effects to enhance the night-flying modes and 3Dfx support just to show off.

More info on these upcoming games can be found at www.janes.ea.com. 




More Mighty Magic

The world's second longest-running RPG series is continuing to nip at *Ultima*'s heels. New World Computing's *Might & Magic* range is gearing up for its sixth title – *The Mandate Of Heaven*.

Two new engines have been developed for the game, covering external and interior locations. Both promise to provide 360 degree freedom of movement from a first-person perspective, with 3D accelerator support to follow soon.

The storyline has been given an overhaul, with a dynamic path system allowing for multiple plotlines to branch out at any point. In essence, you're just a small part of a large on-going 'world'.

New World are promising a November release and we'll bring you more magical details very soon. 



Off their HEDZ




Frogger – Konami's 1981 arcade classic – is to be resurrected on PC this November.

Hasbro show there's more to them than boardgame conversions.

HEDZ (meaning Head Extreme Destruction Zone) is one of the most original titles PC Zone has ever seen, but not one of the

easiest to describe. It's a shoot 'em up with collectable heads, and it's set in a place called The Flux – a series of 35 themed combat arenas, coloured vibrantly and modelled in full 3D using hybrid voxel/polygon technology... and, erm, there are 225 unique heads to collect and use, each with their own special qualities. It's... it's... well... bloody mad, that's what. Any game with a Muhammad Ali character that 'floats like a butterfly' and attacks the opposition with controlled swarms of bees must definitely be a few sandwiches short of a picnic. So raise a glass for the boys at Vis Interactive, the Scottish development team responsible for Hasbro's *HEDZ* – a bravely different, destined-for-stardom, ultra cool combat game, due out in November.

Not so original, but just as much fun, is *Frogger* – Hasbro's timely reincarnation of everyone's favourite road accident victim. Complete with full 3D graphics, 50 levels, ten 3D worlds, and manic quad split-screen play, *Frogger*'s November release will no doubt trigger waves of nostalgic hysteria.

Check www.hasbro.com for more information. 



Vis Interactive's sumptuously coloured *HEDZ* has to be seen to be believed. There is some originality left in this business it seems after all!



...and Beckham picks it up from the halfway line...

Sid in space

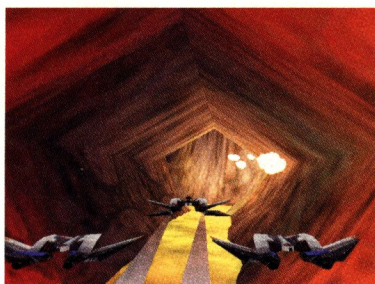
Although Sid Meier is currently locked away in an isolation booth, bang in the middle of the Amazon jungle putting the finishing touches to

his forthcoming real-time strategy game *Gettysburg*, he's still found time to leak news of his next project to the press via on-line sources. *Alpha Centauri* is being described as a real-time epic intergalactic strategy game, which will be presented

in a similar way to *Civilization*, and will be officially announced by Firaxis once *Gettysburg* is complete. More details are scarce at present, but make sure you keep an eye on www.firaxis.com for further announcements.

DATA PAD

◀ (From left to right) 3D pow-wow treats in *Profiteer*, WWII flightster *Wings Of Destiny*, and cool boarding in the forthcoming *Psybadek*.



Psygnosis: what's the story?



Calm down... calm down. Cheeky Scousers Psygnosis are launching a major offensive on the PC market.

To this end they have announced details of more games than you could shake a 3Dfx card at, all of which will support that very same piece of graphics-enhancing hardware.

Respect Inc is a 3D adventure set in 1930's Chicago. As an ambitious small-time gangster, respect must be earned through a combination of intimidation, violence and good old-fashioned bribery and corruption. Success will be rewarded with fancy threads, sexually adventurous women and a daily tureen of Jack Daniels. Not all of this is true.

With a nod towards nostalgia, *The Sentinel* is being remade. *Sentinel Returns* will update Geoff Crammond's classic '80s strategy game, presumably improving on the Commodore 64's audio-visual austerity, but hopefully maintaining the original's addictiveness and intensity.

Profiteer is an arcade shoot 'em up with a tactical slant. As well as violently slaughtering alien lifeforms, the player must also manage research facilities, autopsy labs, wingmen creation procedures and weapons manufacture. The first of a series, the game is part of a five-year plan to establish an elaborate on-line gaming world.

Overboard! was briefly covered last month, but the sea-faring arcade puzzler is worth another mention as we recently got the chance to play an early version (looks good), and have a shot for you to feast your eyes on.

Psybadek is described as a 3D hoverdek (nope, we don't get it either) arcade action game. It features two characters, a guy named Xako and a girl called Mia, who are graced with their own distinct storyline and array of abilities. The game will be played from a third-person perspective and will boast full freedom of movement.



Psybadek's characters are distinctly Japanese by design. And there are a lot of them too. The little breeders (sic).



3D platform games, eh? Now Psygnosis have one in the form of *Rascal*. *Mario64* has a lot to answer for.

Psygnosis' forthcoming World War II flight sim, *Wings Of Destiny*, allows you to fight for either side and offers a choice of four planes: the Messerschmitt, the P51 Mustang, the ME262 German Fighter and the trusty Spitfire. Obviously,

every decent Englishman will make like Douglas Bader and slap down the evil Hun.

Formula 1 '97 represents a swift update for the Grand Prix simulator-cum-arcade game. With enhanced graphics, and all the official F1 teams, drivers and cars for the 1997 season, the player can take his pick. Just make sure you don't get lumbered with Damon 'one point' Hill...

Moorcock, Moorcock, Michael Moorcock, you fervently moan. Set in the fantasy novelist's universe, *Elric* is a beat 'em up action game based on combat and the use of magical runes. As the eponymous hero, you must resurrect your beloved Cymoril by reconstructing the Cross Of Chaos in an isometric real-time fashion.

And finally, *Rascal* is a 3D platform game with main character design by the late Jim Henson's Creature Workshop. Accelerated 3D graphics doff a cap in the direction of Nintendo's recent *Mario* hit.

All of Psygnosis' new titles are scheduled for the end of this year or the beginning of the next. As usual, believe it when you see it. **Z**



(Above inset) Kneecap your friends in *Respect Inc*. (Above, left to right) Man, *Overboard!*, *Formula 1* gets a facelift in this '97 edition, and goblins and wizards in *Elric*.

Stand aside: Men In Black

Ladies and gentlemen, please stand aside for the *Men In Black* – a team of intergalactic law enforcers determined to rid the Earth of

the scum of the universe and to star in a spanky computer game of their very own. Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones' ultra chic sci-fi blockbuster is to be turned into a non-stop action-based adventure, thanks to the largely

unknown talents of LA-based developers Chronic Entertainment (who acquired the licence themselves). *Men In Black* will use Chronic's own "top secret game engine" and is due for release some time before Christmas. A UK publisher has yet to be announced.



French Fancies



Bet you wish you were this Hexplore caption don't you?

Prepare to sate your adventuring appetite with four new pre-Christmas releases from Infogrames.

Voodoo Kid sees you as the eponymous stripling trapped aboard

a mysterious pirate ship by the nefarious Baron Saturday. Acquiring voodoo skills, which presumably means sticking pins into small dolls and sacrificing the odd chicken or two, it'll be your task to free your fellow captives and evade the loathsome attentions of the Voodoo Baron.

Pilgrim continues in the adventuring vein, transporting you back to medieval Europe on a quest to deliver a manuscript containing the lost Gospel Of St John. It boasts some highly impressive 'Moebius' graphics

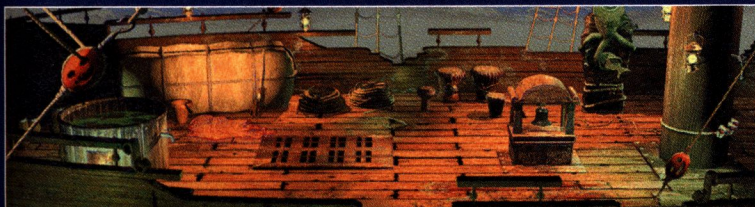
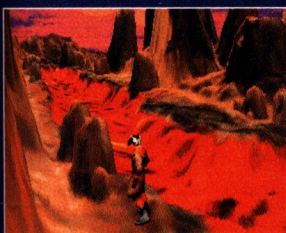
and an authentic 13th century feel – if lurking about in a suit of armour is your thing, you certainly won't be disappointed.

Yet more medieval larks beckon attractively in **Hexplore**, a real-time fighting adventure fest which sees you controlling up to four different characters and taking on a sinister brotherhood of dark sorcerers, in a fevered race to find the lost garden of Eden.

Alternatively, try taking on the mantle of Stan Blaskowicz (Eh? – Ed.) and

plunging into the virtual world of **Outcast** – a richly detailed action adventure, which apparently features a full musical score

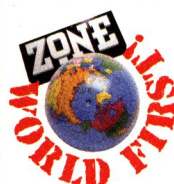
from the infamous Moscow Symphony Orchestra. Woo. **Z**



"What shall we do with the drunken sailor, 'erl-aye in the mornin'?" Well, you can keep the hairy-backed, rum-soaked ruffian out of our cabin for starters.



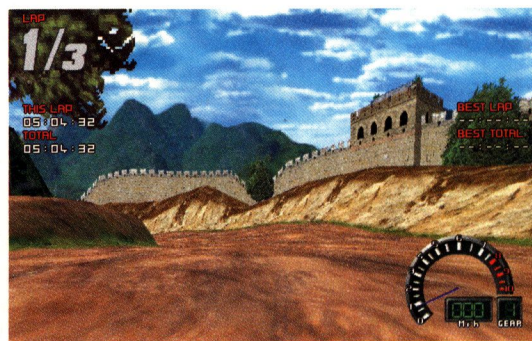
Facelift for Screamer 2



Development of Virgin's **Screamer 2** did not stop after the game's release late last year. Milestone, the people who designed and coded the original game, continued to work on it and are now almost ready to unveil an updated, graphically enhanced version known as **Screamer 2 Rally**.

Most of the original elements will be retained in this new version (same AI, physics, structure etc), but this time players will get the opportunity to drive five of the best-known rally cars (Lancia Delta HF, Renault Megane, BMW, Subaru Impreza, plus a new bonus vehicle) across England and Columbia, on four new off-road and dirt tracks (Tuscany, snowbound Grand Canyon, Canada and China).

There'll also be a revised front end, six (rather than four) CPU opponents, and full 3D card support – all for under £30. According to 3Dfx, the most requested game after **Quake** for a 3Dfx makeover is **Screamer 2**, and since **Screamer 2 Rally** supports 3Dfx, that should keep most people satisfied. **Screamer 2 Rally** will be revving into action some time in November. **Z**



...McManaman pulls the defender wide...glorious one-two..!

Tank Platoon sequel announced

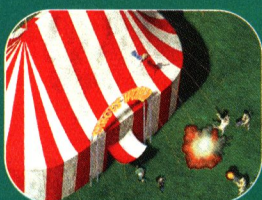
MicroProse wowed everyone at the E3 show in Atlanta recently, with the last-minute inclusion of *M1 Tank Platoon 2* into their exhibition of titles.

Featuring campaigns in the Middle East and former Soviet republics, including an all-out war that involves the whole of Europe, *M1 Tank Platoon 2* is a vast, impressive-looking combat sim lined up for immediate success.

With stunning graphics (even in unaccelerated form), dramatically-lit night missions, and a comprehensive mission builder, you can bet that *M1 Tank Platoon 2* is one title we'll be keeping you well up to date with in future issues.

DATA PAD

Gametek hopes to reap reward



(Top) *The Reap* has some great lighting effects (and you can quote us on that).

While we await the arrival of Gametek's *Dark Colony*, news of two new releases from the Windsor-based company reaches us, thanks to successful undercover surveillance work courtesy of The Man Who Knows.

Looking mighty fine is *The Reap* – a colourful isometric blast 'em up with advanced AI that reads your progression through the game to control forthcoming events and direction. *The Reap* is currently set on four worlds of different terrain comprising a desert, an underwater city, some ice caves and a futuristic city. Each world houses massive 3D modelled levels, complete with unique light sourcing and a host of other special effects.

Guardians Of Justice, the second Gametek title uncovered by our Fedora-clad detective, also plumbs for an isometric viewpoint, but is slower paced with roots in adventure and strategy genres. With licence to fly around and get in people's faces and stuff, you'll play the role of a superhero – serving and protecting whatever simulated metropolis the game chooses to dump you in.

Sources indicate an end-of-year release for both games, so keep your eyes firmly peeled for more information. **Z**



Hang up your hang ups in *Interstate '77*.

Back on the road again

Auto-vigilantes hungry for more bell-bottomed, in-car action would do well to note the November release of Activision's official follow-up to *Interstate '76*, in the shape of the logically titled *Interstate '77*.

A standalone epilogue to its innovative predecessor, *Interstate '77* is an expansion pack, but unlike many other add-ons, you won't need the original *Interstate '76* to run it. The player this time assumes the role of Taurus,

the poet-warrior who guided Groove Champion through the first game, in a battle to save the world from the

destructive grip of a warmongering General. Now however, Taurus will have a sidekick called Jenny and the game will also feature many other new characters, as well as all the old favourites. **Z**

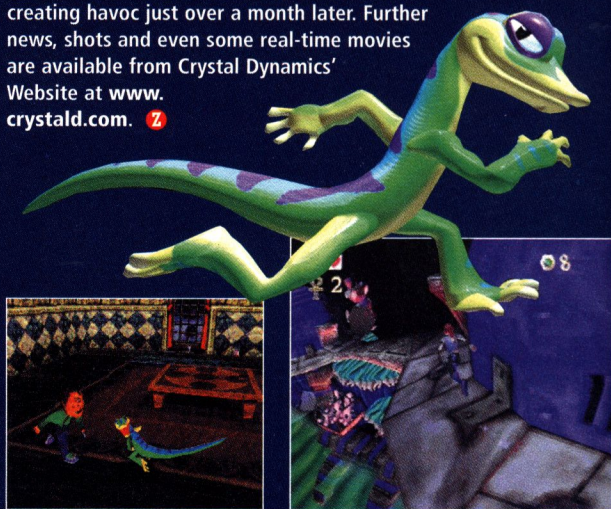


Gex II meets Pandemonium too

Small lizards with detachable tails are not usually the stuff of gaming legend, yet Crystal Dynamics' *Gex: Enter The Gecko* could be about to reverse that negative trend. It's a rather splendid-looking 3D actioner, which pits the reptilian Gex against his arch-enemy Rez in a battle for control of the nation's TV channels. Comedian Dana Gould provides the voiceovers in what promises to be a vast, satirical side-swipe at all things Hollywood.

It won't surprise you to learn either, that *Pandemonium 2* follows directly on from its illustrious predecessor, but this time boasts a variety of enhanced characters, extra moves and a new roving 3D camera. The psychedelic chase for the Comet Of Infinite Possibilities has probably never looked so appealing.

Gex: Enter The Gecko will be slithering onto the gaming shelves in November, while *Pandemonium 2* will be creating havoc just over a month later. Further news, shots and even some real-time movies are available from Crystal Dynamics' Website at www.crystald.com. **Z**



Gex: Enter the Gecko (left) and *Pandemonium 2* in a 3D platform style.

The HitchHiker returns!

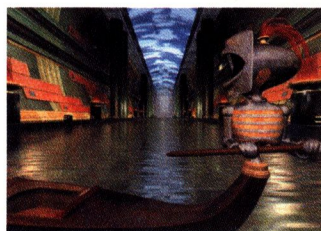


Sci-fi uber-author and comedy god Douglas Adams has stepped back into the world of computer games after a prolonged absence with *Starship Titanic*, an adventure game firmly in the *HitchHiker's* tradition.

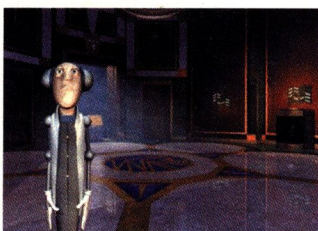
Adams' last venture into the arena was with the much-missed adventure specialists Infocom and *Bureaucracy*, but now with his new multimedia company, The Digital Village, he hopes to reinvent the somewhat staid world of the adventure game.

Key features of *Starship Titanic* include a marriage of Myth-style graphics to the old Infocom-style of storytelling, and the re-emergence of a text-input control system that allows the player a greater sense of freedom in conversations than any game to date.

The Digital Village have set up a very stylish and specialised Website to help promote the game at www.starship-titanic.com, which is definitely worth a visit, and we hope to bring you an in-depth look at *Starship Titanic* in the next few months. **Z**



Douglas Adams' long-awaited adventure game, *Starship Titanic*, is announced.



Sure plays a mean pinball

Full Tilt! 2 Pinball is the rather clumsy name of Interplay's forthcoming sequel to Virgin's previous hit. Confused? You should be.

Developed by NMS, the guys who did the original Full Tilt! for Virgin, Full Tilt! 2 Pinball is to feature three new full-screen tables with themes based on superheroes, aliens and a mad scientist's laboratory. Each table will have its own series of special missions

related to the theme, such as capturing villains on the superhero table, or creating a monster on the mad scientist table, and will be viewable from an unheard of number of angles. If you fancy going flipper-crazy, you'll have to wait until December.



(Left) Could Forsaken outstrip Diablo of its crown?
(Above) Yo - Chill man. The game we mean.

Eidos go game loopy

A year ago they were nobody, now they are not to be messed with - EIDOS keep up their relentless assimilation of the games industry.



Another day, another Eidos

game. Not content with snaffling up big stuff like *Tomb Raider 2* and *Daikatana*, the most prolific publisher in the universe has gathered a rack of 'sleepers' under its belt. *Forsaken*, for instance, is

a Direct3D powered RPG with a Nordic feel. All the usual mod-cons seem to be on hand (real-time lighting, vast immersive gameworld, motion-captured models etc), as well as a new "unprecedented" way of dealing with combat and spells. The artwork has been developed by



Power F1 for Windows 95 is not the same game as Power F1 (for DOS). It's gonna be far more advanced.

Den Beauvais, whose credits include the art direction of the new *Aliens* film. The developers, Cinematix, have taken the *Daggerfall* route and provided non-linear gameplay - you can go where you like. If they can get it working, it could create big waves in the RPG-starved pond that is the PC market. (What? - Ed.)

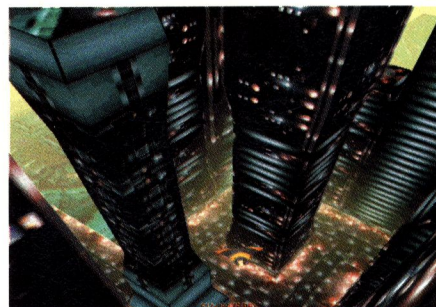
In utter contrast, *Chill* is a snowboard simulator which throws the player down five mountains, 50 runs, and a bunch of scary off-piste challenges.

Expect a cross between *Wave-Racer* and the daft skiing arcade machine with more freedom of direction, a true skeletal animation system, and some two-player split-screen action. Hidden bonus runs and a chance to become King Of The Mountain add extra replay value. Goatee and silly shorts, however, remain optional.

Moving swiftly on, *Lunatic* delves deeply into sci-fi shoot 'em up territory, drawing on the simplicity of such glorious classics

as *Zaxxon* and *Defender*. You get to rove the surface of eight man-made 'moons', indiscriminately blowing up waves of bad guys, bombing the surface, and collecting power-ups. Looks like a return to the mindless blast-a-thons of yore (albeit with a suitably '90s engine), which is cool as far as we're concerned.

Finally, there's *Power F1 Win 95*, a high-speed racing thing, officially sanctioned by Fuji and firmly slanted for realism over mindless arcade action. The 13 teams and their cars have been recreated right down to the quantum level. The 17 tracks have been constructed down to the nearest centimetre from survey maps. Sophisticated AI is intended to capture the personalities and bad habits of famous drivers. Real-life climate conditions are being drawn upon to create 'proper' weather. All this plus loads of cool particle effects, fluid camera views, and a 26-player network option. We're looking forward to it. **4**



Pure Entertainment's *Lunatic*: fine-looking shooter. ►

...and Shearer cuts inside...he turns...shoots..!

DATA PAD

It's all go at GT



(Above) Rob Liefeld's comic comes alive in *Youngblood*. (Right) *Stealth Reaper 2020*: nice landscape, rubbish cockpit.

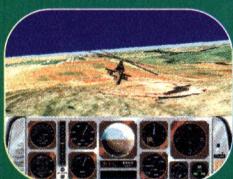


Not content with the likes of *Unreal*, *Shadow Warrior*, *Duke Nukem Forever* and *Prey* on their books, GT Interactive press ever onwards in their quest to keep their burgeoning portfolio fresh and alive.

With the promising *Total Annihilation* taken care of in a Blueprint on page 62, we'll take a look at *BugRiders*. Slated for an autumn release, *BugRiders* is a fast combat-racing game spread over six course styles, with branching courses and evolving tracks. Developers n-Space are also incorporating spilt-screen and multi-player deathmatch elements.

Youngblood – Rob Liefeld's best-selling indie comic about a specialised taskforce of modern superheroes – is the eponymous title of GT's game adaptation. This innovatively presented top-down adventure will feature lots of pre-rendered imagery, over 11 real-time scenarios, and will hit the shelves in November.

GT Interactive are also planning a bold step into the combat flight sim market, with chopper sim *Ahx-1*, which is due for release in September, and "futuristic war machine capable of mass destruction" sim *Stealth Reaper 2020*, scheduled to hit the shelves in October. **Z**



(Above left) Choppers galore in *Ahx-1*. (Above right) *BugRiders*: an F1-loving entomologist's wet dream.



No stopping Maxis

With Sojourner currently plodding its way across the surface of Mars, Maxis – purveyors of all things *Sim* – have announced three new titles,

each with a distinctly extra-terrestrial theme. *Nightfall* will cast the player in the role of a terra-forming engineer charged with developing a barren planet into a habitable world. The task isn't made any easier by a band of alien gits

To be this good takes ages



Or so Sega said. But they still haven't proved it to us. Maybe this little lot will change our minds?

There was no holding back from console and coin-op giant Sega at the recent Electronic Entertainment Expo. The company previewed nine new PC titles which draw strongly on their dominant arcade presence.

Virtual ON: *Cyber Troopers* heads the arcade-to-PC action field, being a frenetic freewheeling 360 degree robo warriors beat 'em up, which offers a choice of hand-to-hand



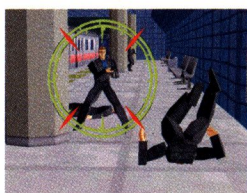
(Above) Something the PC could have done without. (Right) *Virtua Fighter 2* kicks ass.



or ranged cyber combat. One of the first Sega titles to be optimised for MMX, eight different cyber blokes and ten lavish battlefields await your viewing pleasure this August.

Flex more polygonal muscles in *Virtua Fighter 2*, a direct conversion of the popular arcader which features an "ever-changing 3D perspective" plus plenty of knuckle-wearing special moves. *VF2* is also due in August.

(Far right) The Russians are coming: Sega's *Virtual ON*. (Right) Body-popping targets in *Virtua Cop 2*.



WW Soccer: sort those log shadows out Sega!

There's more good news for all things *Virtua* in the shape of *Virtua Cop 2*, slated for release in November. *The Last Bronx*, out in December, completes the beat 'em up roster, and will see you prowling the mean streets of Tokyo looking for aggro in a *Virtua* style.

Debuting in the crowded footie arena in July is *World Wide Soccer*. It boasts fluid 3D animation, multiple camera angles and a plethora of playing options, including squads of fully customisable players. Sports junkies will also be heartened to learn that, erm, that 'tallest' of games – basketball – completes a sports double-header with *NBA '98*, letting you shoot the hoops with hundreds of authentic players from the star-studded league.

Daytona USA Deluxe and a conversion of the successful arcade racer *Sega Touring Car Championship*, both of which support Direct3D acceleration, are planned for January '98.

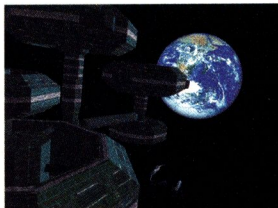
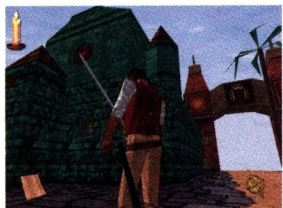
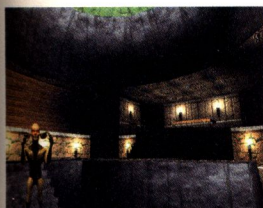
Finally, Sega complete their package with the shoot 'em up *Enemy Zero* and platform compendium *Sonic 3D Blast*, a collection of the spiky one's finest gaming moments. Be sure to enter www.sega.com for further enlightenment. **Z**



who've turned up late to the party. Adapting terra-forming skills and using the actual environment itself to take the fight to the aliens, *Nightfall* seems set to be an action strategy experience of the first order.

Meanwhile, *Tycho Rising* continues the 'other world' theme and sees prospective players struggling to establish Earth's first lunar colony, while *Chromaform* has you dabbling in the murky waters of genetic

manipulation, building and battling enhanced creatures across a wide variety of worlds. Further information on all three of these titles can be found simply by pointing your browser at www.maxis.com.



(From left to right) *Battlespire*; *Redguard*; *The 10th Planet* – sunk up to the nuts in glorious 3D graphics.

My god, it's full of stars

E³ saw Bethesda Softworks embrace release fever with three new titles which should all be seeing daylight before the end of the year.

The long-awaited *10th Planet* is an epic interstellar conflict (co-developed by *Independence Day* creators Centropolis), which combines searing space combat with detailed strategic planning. Featuring massive multiple fleet battles and a faithfully rendered solar

system, with over 80 different planets and moons, just take a butchers at our sexy, exclusive screenshots and we're sure you'll agree that fighting the alien hordes from beyond Pluto has never looked so graphically gorgeous.

Although we first blew the lid (as it were) on both *Battlespire* and *Redguard* last issue, fans of the *Elder Scrolls* series will be heartened to feast their mince pies on these new screenshots, which promise plenty

The guys behind the spectacular (but risible) *Independence Day* are now working on *10th Planet*.

of XnGine-powered fantasy antics from the ever-popular role-playing universe. *Battlespire* is set for an early doors release in August, with *The 10th Planet* and *Redguard* leaping off the sub's bench some time around Christmas. **Z**



Oh no, more Worms

One of the most enjoyable games of last year is to be given a spanking new lease of life thanks to Team 17 Software. *Worms 2* is the madcap sequel to the deranged game of annelid annihilation that proved to be even more addictive than *Puzzle Bobble* on mescaline or a truckload of Walls' Big Feasts.



This time, up to eight players can take part in any one match, with all new weapons being deployed on the hapless wrigglers. Even more interesting is the weapon editor that allows you to devise your own maniacal killing machines.



The graphics have been given a bit of spit and polish and now look more 'cartoony' than ever, with over 8,000 frames of animation in the full game. You can also create a variety of your own sound effects to torture your friends with whenever you turn one of their soldiers into, er, a can of wormfood.

More information about this sequel can be found on the world wide worm (*Terrible – Ed.*) at www.worms2.com. **Z**

Andy Davidson, Bournemouth-based *Worms* creator, returns with more slimy firearms fun.



RUNS ON
PENTIUM[®]
PROCESSOR

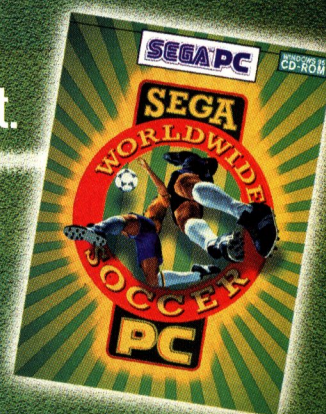
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SEGA[™] **PC**

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Exorcising demons

PC Zone recently took its first ever look at *Demonworld*, a new real-time fantasy strategy game from German developers Ikarion, first

impressions of which were, erm, how should we describe them? Well, somewhat mixed really. Apparently inspired by Mindscape's adaptation of the *WarHammer* series, *Demonworld* is a weird combination of real-time strategy gaming

(hex-based, you'll be pleased to know) and die-hard role-playing. The press blurb says it's a "simulation" (erm, no...) and mentions an August release in its native land of Germany. A UK publisher has yet to confirmed.



DATA PAD

THE MAN WHO KNOWS



Regular readers should know the form by now, so let's not waste any time and instead dive straight into revealing the latest ins and outs in this wonderful business we call game.

Along with virtually every parasite who ever waggled a joystick, Atlanta, Georgia, served as the destination earlier this month for the annual **Electronic Entertainment Expo**, or E³ if you will. The show itself proved to be business as usual, and was therefore a vulgar circus of ostentation and exploitation. Ludicrously expensive stands jostled for position, and companies stopped at nothing to gain attention for their products (which if the loudmouthed Americans in baseball hats and suits were to be believed, were all absolutely brilliant). Liars. I must admit that the pounding music and flashing lights proved a little fierce for a creature of the night, although I did find myself unwittingly drawn towards the **Eidos** stand, where an array of scantily clad **Fighting Force** girls performed a particularly interesting hourly dance. Nevertheless, despite a plethora of **T&A** on display, and the fact that this year's show was the biggest yet, the attendance dipped drastically from last year's Los Angeles-based event, dropping by some 35 per cent. This can probably be attributed to the East Coast location, as most of the games industry is located on the West Coast. Unfortunately, the same venue has already been booked for next year's show. It gets you out of the house, I suppose.

Moving swiftly on, fans of old-school point-and-click adventure **Sam & Max** may be interested to learn that the canine/lepine freelance police duo are set to star in their own animated television series. Toronto production company **Nelvana Ltd** are currently planning to produce 26 11-minute episodes for **Fox Kids** in the States. Creator **Steve Purcell** is involved, the director is **Steve Whitehouse** and the story editing will be by **Dan Smith**. Hopefully the series will make its way to these shores as soon as is humanly possible. 'Let dog see rabbit', as I believe they are wont to say in the North of England.

Development company **AnyRiver Entertainment** has died an early death. Their woes were primarily financial, and not helped by the fact that of five titles in development, three were canned after a significant amount of work had already been carried out. Of the remainder, the interesting looking **Flying Saucer** went way over budget and was delayed for eight months. This left the company with only one marketable product, **A Fork In The Tale**, a universally slated full-motion video adventure that sold less than a thousand copies Stateside and has yet to see the light of day over here.

UPN from **Grolier Interactive** has undergone a change of name, and will now be released as **Xenocracy**. Developed by Simis, it's a futuristic space combat and flight simulation affair set within our own solar system. If it's anything like Grolier's **Banzai Bug** (which we rather doubt it will be), it'll certainly be one to avoid.

After the brouhaha preceding the release of the vehicular gore 'em up **Carmageddon**, the game shot to the top of the hit parade within two days of its release. Naturally, publishers **SCI** were chuffed and managing director **Jane Cavanagh** was moved to comment: "We're extremely pleased. Much has been made about the alleged controversial content of **Carmageddon**, with certain ill-informed quarters calling for an all-out ban. We have always maintained that **Carmageddon** is the game that the market wants and are pleased that the customers are endorsing that view." All of which goes to prove that sometimes there's no such thing as bad publicity.

On the subject of controversial car games, following last month's revelation concerning **Grand Theft Auto** being raised in the House Of Lords, my snouts have furnished me with a transcript of the proceedings and I enclose this brief excerpt. Lord Campbell Of Croy: "Is it true, as reported, that the game includes thefts of cars, joyriding, hit-and-run accidents, and being chased by the police (*Let's hope so - Ed.*), and that there will be nothing to stop children from buying it? To use current terminology, is that not an 'off-message' for young people?"

Here's some more current terminology: Kiss my arse. Cheers then.

Ubisoft announce four



A rack of new releases, destined to whet the appetites of sports and arcade fans alike.



(Above left) Create your own **Rayman** levels in Ubi's new **Gold Edition**. (Above) **F1 Race Sim**: best of bunch.

The snappily titled F1 Racing

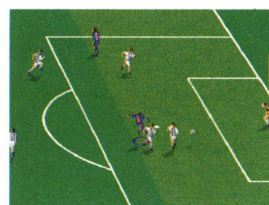
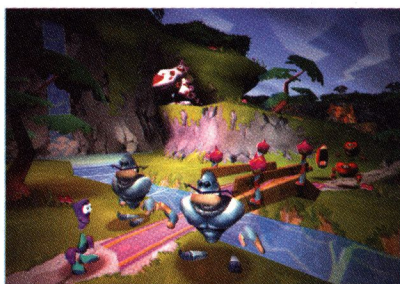
Simulation does exactly what it says on the box, being an immaculately detailed sim of the 1996 season. With tasty 3D accelerated graphics and a full roster of teams from Damon's championship year, this could be a real contender for **F1GP2**'s pole position.

On the other side of reality, **Tonic Trouble** is a colourful, flipped-out action adventure game which takes full advantage of Pentium II technology to create a host of original (and obviously drug-enduced) effects. Featuring Ed the ET's efforts to retrieve a psychedelic potion which has fallen to earth, **Tonic Trouble** already looks graphically sumptuous and promises to be one of the more innovative and, yes, frankly weird adventure releases of the year.

Rayman Gold sees the popular platformer receive a full body makeover, with the addition of 24 new levels, plus a set of construction tools to design your own maps.

Finally, for footie fans, **World Football '98** offers a soccer fest that's tweaked for speed and realism (though not graphical style obviously), with commentary from Sky's Martin Tyler.

All four titles will be appearing between now and Christmas and will receive substantial on-line support with extras, levels and add-ons freely available from the Ubi's Website at www.ubisoft.co.uk.



(Far left) Pentium II only, **Tonic Trouble**. (Left) It's a footie game with sprites!

You read it here first

Oh yes, you most certainly did. As we 'send the mag to bed' here are a few last-minute snippets of games-related info that came into the office at the wrong end of the schedule...

Old and crusty (not to mention, usually trusty) Elite have seen fit to announce five new PC games (publishers TBC), all of which are due for release before the end of the year. The line-up includes **KPH** (a 3D driving game), **Ford Challenge** (the official licensed multi-player on/off road racing

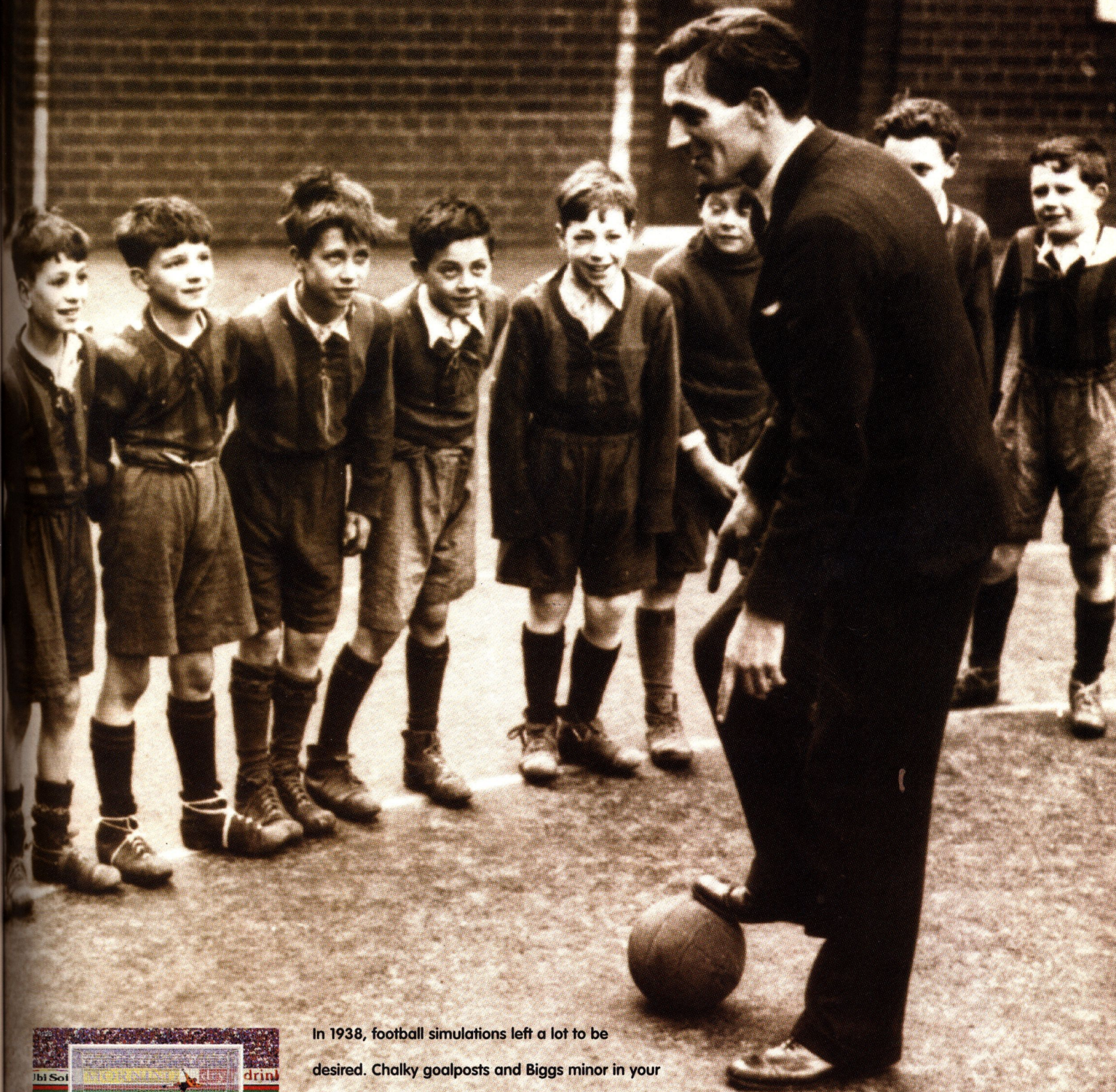
game), **Super Touring** (a six-car, circuit-based touring car racer), **Dr Franken Jr** (apparently the 'spiritual successor' to the lacklustre Gameboy platformer that was released back in the early '80s), and **The Elimination Game** (an action/strategy 3D 'gameshow' affair). How about **Kokotoni Wilf '98** or **Airwolf 3D** instead?

The secret football management project from Maxis, **Player Manager '98**, has been delayed due to EA's recent acquisition of the

company. A new release date has yet to be confirmed.

Now YRIHF simply wouldn't be the same without at least one *Star Wars*-related rumour, so raise your hands and sing hallelujah for news of yet another LucasArts invention: the N64 to PC conversion! Rumours of a PC version of *Shadows Of The Empire*, a game which is currently wowing Nintendo 64 owners the world over, can now be backed up with hard facts - it'll be 3Dfx only, and will be out before Christmas. Yay!

THE BOYS AGREED THEY WERE THE MOST REALISTIC GOALPOSTS THEY HAD EVER SEEN

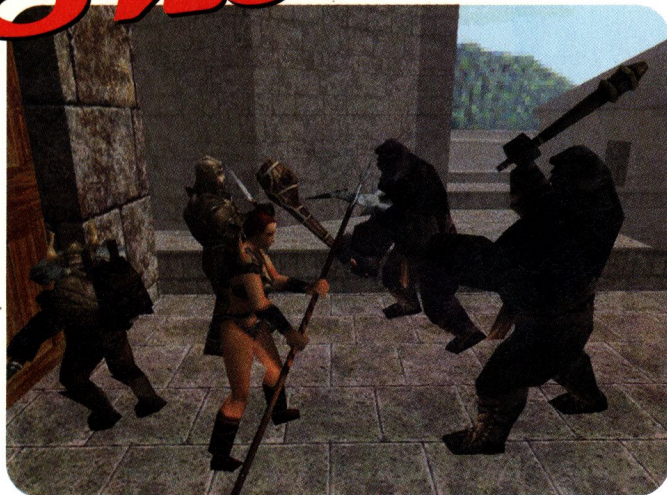


In 1938, football simulations left a lot to be desired. Chalky goalposts and Biggs minor in your team. Fortunately, today there's World Football '98. As well as a choice of 6086 real life players and 358 teams, World Football '98 brings you seriously fast action and intense realism. It's also got great goalposts.

Ubi Soft
ENTERTAINMENT

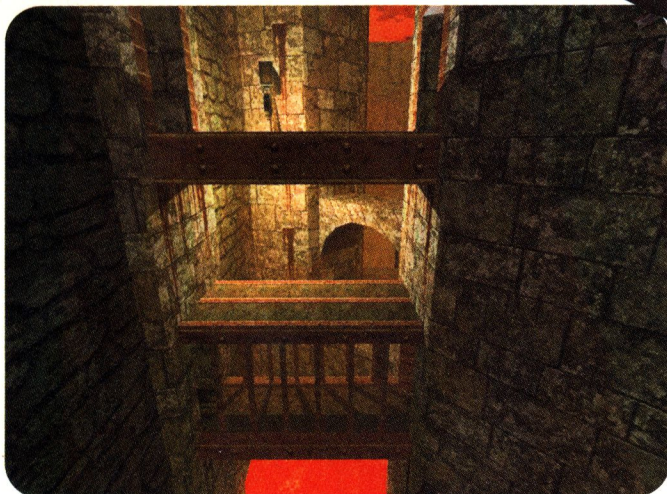
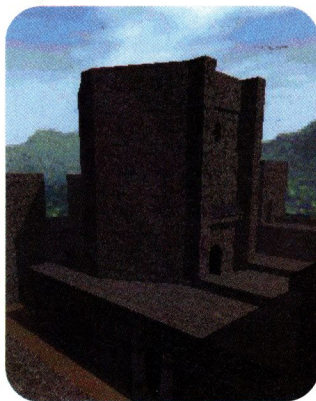
HOT Shots

Gracing these fine pages and this month's cover CD, you'll find a spanky collection of the very latest in-game screenshots from many of the hottest games currently in development. So Ladies and Gentlemen, we proudly present Hot Shots: the original and the best. Accept no imitations.



Blade (Rebel Act)

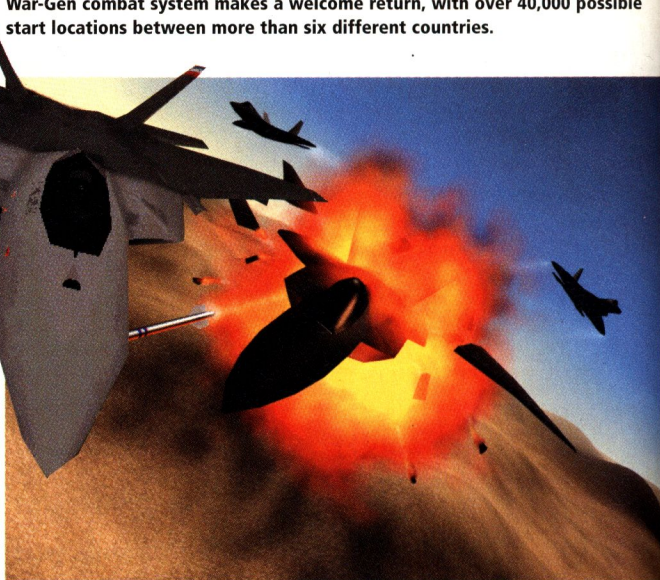
Exclusively revealed way back in issue 45, Rebel Act's fantasy action adventure, *Blade*, has advanced significantly since we first saw it, and we've now got some new screenshots for you to drool over (we've even wiped our own drool off for you). As yet, there's still no UK distributor lined up to take the game on, but rumour has it that EA are tipped as prime candidates. One thing's for sure, whoever gets hold of *Blade* will no doubt have a hit on their hands when it sees the light of day early next year.



F22 Air Dominance Fighter (DID)

Those good old Warrington boys at DID have had their heads down beavering away on their new F22 sim – and by jiminy, it's looking incredibly good. Having witnessed an accelerated version of the game up and running at the E3 Show in Atlanta recently, the *PC Zone* team came away suitably impressed.

The latest in a long line of F22 sims, *Air Dominance Fighter* utilises enhanced 3D graphics technology featuring advanced light sourcing, transparent cloud layers, night vision and atmospheric weather conditions. DID's incredible War-Gen combat system makes a welcome return, with over 40,000 possible start locations between more than six different countries.





Fighting Force (Core Design)

On course to be one of the most spectacular beat 'em up titles to appear on PC, Core's *Fighting Force* is currently wowing all who've seen it, with its super-fast polygon graphics and relentless in-ya-face action. The game itself is reminiscent of classic scrolling beat 'em ups such as *Final Fight*, *Double Dragon* and *Kung Fu Master* (remember that?), except this time the camera will follow you around in full 3D. With knobs on. My how things have changed.



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FIRST TIME underground.

Actual 360° views from the game.

A promotional poster for the video game Zork Grand Inquisitor. The central focus is a glowing orange lantern held by a gloved hand. In the background, a blue, devil-like face with horns and a single tear is visible. The title 'ZORK' is written in a large, stylized font across the lantern, with 'Grand Inquisitor' in a smaller font below it. The Activision logo is in the top right corner.

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Grand Opening, Winter 1997 WINDOWS® 95 CD-ROM

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**PC
ZONE**

our price

CHART

Predictions

2

AGERELY AWAITED FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS AND STRAIGHT INTO THE NUMBER one position is *Dungeon Keeper*. Guaranteed to keep game fanatics everywhere up all night, this new title has been selling like hot cakes, so buy it while you can to avoid disappointment.

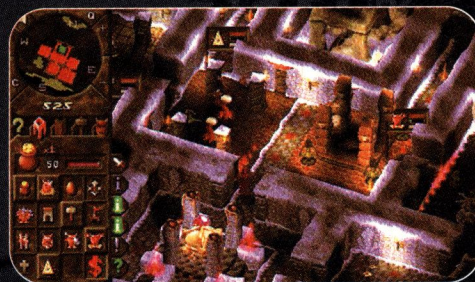
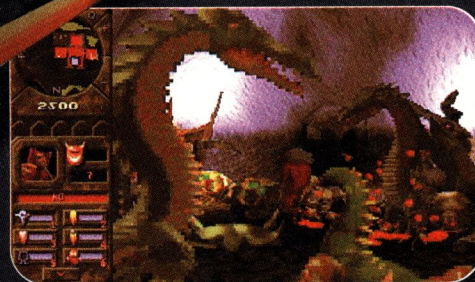
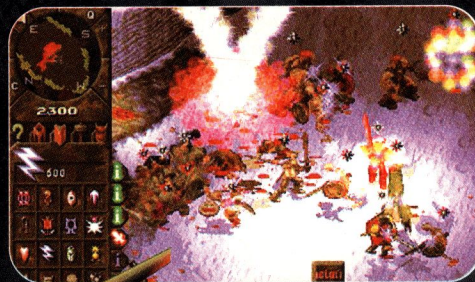
Meanwhile, *Puzzle Bobble* is proving to be another popular option, holding firm at number five in the chart. This great game is affordably priced at £14.99 and is well worth every penny.

Finally, to take part in this month's Our Price Top 10 prize giveaway, just put pen to paper, answer the question below and send it in to: PC Zone Our Price Competition CPCZ79A, Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ, UK.

OUR PRICE QUESTION: Who developed *Dungeon Keeper*?

Rules and restrictions: All entries must be received by Friday 29 August 1997. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final and the winners will be notified by post.

All other usual restrictions apply.



Welcome to PC Zone's version of *The Chart Show*, sponsored by Our Price. Each month it'll feature the titles we think will be flying off the shelves in the coming weeks, and it will also play host to exclusive news and competitions.

1

DUNGEON KEEPER
(Electronic Arts)
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2

CARMAGEDDON
(SCI)
£24.99



3

ACTUA SOCCER
(Gremlin Interactive)
£7.99



4

DARK FORCES (WHITE LABEL)
(LucasArts/VIE)
£9.99



5

PUZZLE BOBBLE
(GT Interactive)
£14.99



6

FIFA SOCCER MANAGER
(EA Sports)
£29.99



7

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER 2
(Virgin)
£14.99



8

X-WING Vs TIE FIGHTER
(LucasArts)
£29.99



9

DUKE NUKEM
(GT Interactive)
£9.99



10

C&C: RED ALERT
(Virgin)
£29.99



DISCLAIMER: The Top 10 printed is correct at the time of going to press but positions, titles and prices may vary throughout the month.

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Oi!

...Molyneux!

This month Mistah **Charlie Brookah** travels to Guildford to talk shop with Peter Molyneux, creator of *Dungeon Keeper*...

P

ETER MOLYNEUX HAS THE SORT OF kitchen you'd expect to find in a Bond villain's secret lair, by which I mean that it's got loads of hi-tech gadgetry lurking beneath every surface. Push a foot panel, and a large set of automated shelves emerge from either side of the (immense) refrigerator, bearing food. The cooker rises up from beneath the sideboard when required, and lowers itself back down again when no longer needed. No doubt the bread bin unfolds to project a rotating holographic globe in the centre of the room each time he fancies launching one of the missiles he's got tucked away under the tennis court out back.

The man has quite clearly got a penny or two. Apart from being the creative driving force behind a series of wildly successful games such as *Populous*, *Syndicate*, *Theme Park*, *Magic Carpet* and, most recently, *Dungeon Keeper*, he was also head of Bullfrog, the company which developed said games for Electronic Arts. But he's not head of Bullfrog any more. He's left to form his own company, Lionhead. We sat him down and asked him why...

PC ZONE:

So why leave Bullfrog, huh?

PETER MOLYNEUX: It's a funny thing. It's been going on so long, but I couldn't legally say anything up until now, which is rather like having a very, very big bloke holding a very, very big gun to your head 24 hours a day - extremely frustrating. The main reason I'm leaving is that I want to concentrate on what I really enjoy doing: making software.

ZONE: Couldn't you have done that at Bullfrog?

PM: When Bullfrog got to a certain size, it changed. It was part of a massive organisation. It became a

Look, it's Esther Rantzen. Let's tell her how much we hate her, shall we? 1, 2, 3: "We hate you, Esther!" Yaay!



Peter's playthings: (From above) *Populous*, *Syndicate*, *Theme Park*, *Magic Carpet*, *Dungeon Keeper*, *Theme Hospital* and *Syndicate Wars*. And every single one of them's a winner. By god, you can almost hear the epochs shattering.

more corporate environment. It became a place where there were fire drills, where there had to be a certain number of plugs per desk, where everyone had to have a regulation wastepaper bin and a regulation monitor. I want to concentrate on writing software, and not give a shit about whether or not you've got regulation equipment and all that bollocks.

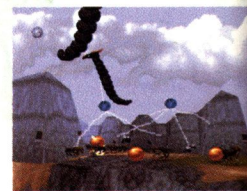
I was spending a lot of time doing the corporate stuff, going to meetings - endless meetings - and at the end of the day I used to come home at

eight o'clock on the dot and wonder what the bloody hell I'd done all day.

I couldn't have gone back to being a programmer at Bullfrog - it would never have worked. I'd been managing director and you can't just switch all of that off.

ZONE: How much pressure was there to finish *Dungeon Keeper*?

PM: I can't tell you how much pressure there was to release *Dungeon Keeper*. There was pressure from EA, there was pressure from people at Bullfrog, pressure from the whole of the industry, you could say. There was so much pressure that a lot of very silly things happened. At times it was really tempting just to say "right then", and release it - but we had to get it right. It's not just my game, it's the entire team's game. They all worked



What's Your Game?

16 hours a day, every day. That's why everyone looks so crap and knackered – because we are.

ZONE: But it did look more or less finished a year ago. What's taken so long?

PM: I think this industry is *incredibly* lazy with most of the games it produces. If you look at *Bounty Bob Strikes Back* on the Commodore 64, it had more hidden features, more lovely touches than most of today's games. That's what *used* to happen: programmers would devote time to what seemed to be stupid little things, but if you put all those stupid little things together you realise that they made a big portion of the game. People don't do that these days. If they produce a shoot 'em up, it's 'a shoot 'em up' – that's it. There's no atmosphere, no little features which add to it. The industry is just producing the same game over and over again. They just chuck all the features into the first five levels and then that's it. With 30 more levels to go, they just twiddle the knobs and give you the same thing again and again.

I wanted *Dungeon Keeper* to be more organised, to be more like the original games used to be, where you were never quite sure what you'd find. I wanted it to have so many features that people wouldn't be able to discover them all. It *has* taken a huge effort, but that's the sort of effort we should be making with games. We (the *Dungeon Keeper* team) aren't necessarily any better than anyone else – the secret is that we've played it and played it and worked really hard at getting it right.

It's an indefinable thing – you can't say "right, we're at this stage of development, and in two weeks time we'll be finished". That's

"If you try to force something, you're left with a crap game."

impossible to say. At any time you could hit a brick wall, and you're going to have to design around it. That could take a week, a month, or a year. A year and a half ago *Dungeon Keeper* could have been released, and it would have been an okay game. It would have sold well. But that's not the point, that's not why I'm doing this.

ZONE: What are you going to do now then, eh?

PM: I'm going to write games with a bunch of friends. If you have fun while you're making something, it shows in the final product. If you try to force something, you have a crap time when you're doing it, and you're left with a crap game.

ZONE: Is anyone else from Bullfrog coming with you?

PM: The only person I'm using at the moment is Mark Webley (lead programmer on *Theme Hospital*). He's my brother-in-law and a very good friend. We've always worked together and I

(Above) Now you too can be just as rich and successful as Peter Molyneux. Simply cut out this mask and stick it on your face with the aid of some elastic. Or glue.

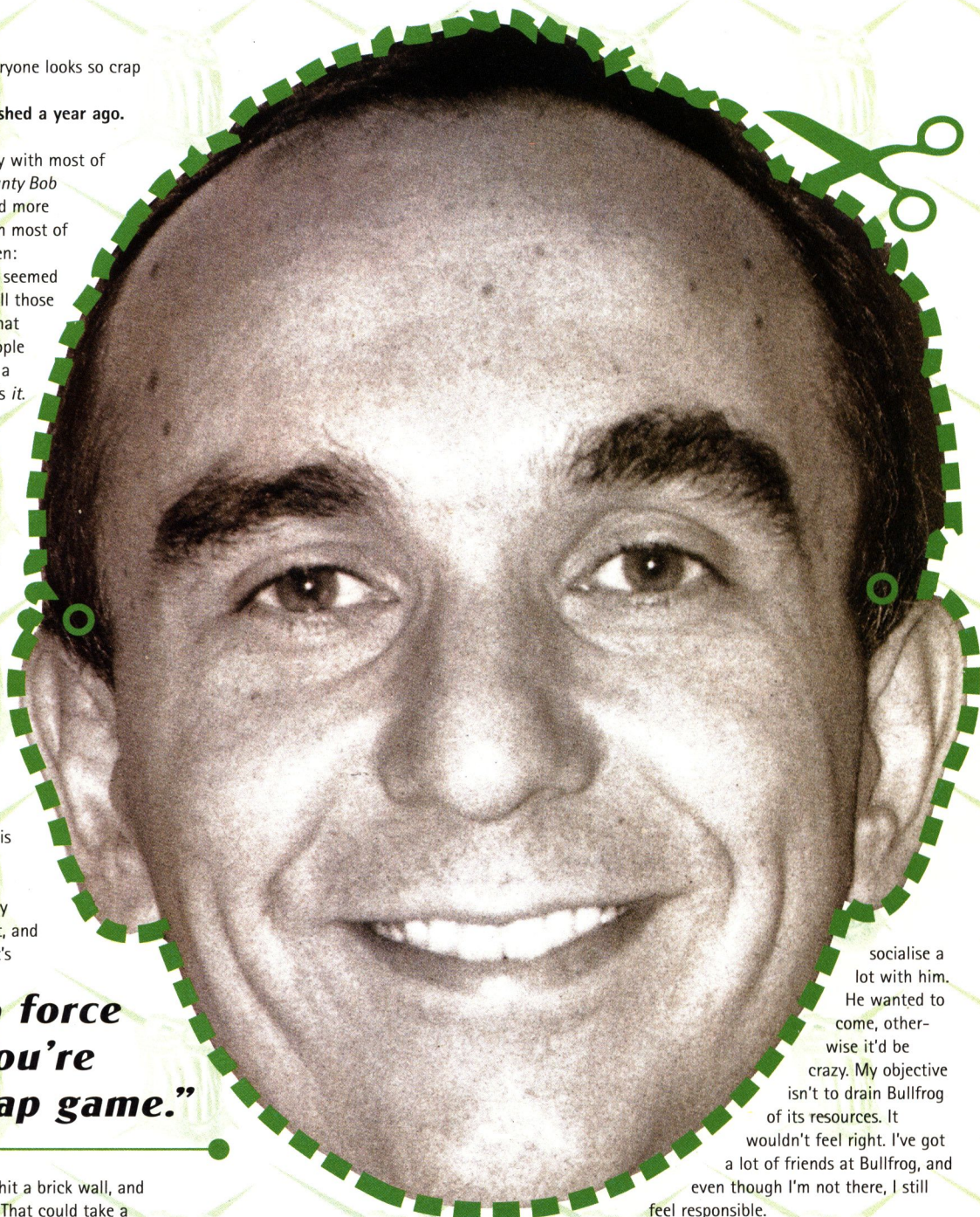
socialise a lot with him. He wanted to come, otherwise it'd be crazy. My objective isn't to drain Bullfrog of its resources. It wouldn't feel right. I've got a lot of friends at Bullfrog, and even though I'm not there, I still feel responsible.

ZONE: If, following your departure, Bullfrog went on to produce the greatest game of all time, would you feel just a tiny bit jealous?

PM: No, I wouldn't. I'd feel proud because most of the people were there in the early days. Right from the start Bullfrog was designed the way that I thought you should design a business. It's a simple theory: I never, ever tell people to do things. I'll never say: "You sit down, and you do this now." Let people use their own abilities to do things, rather than use them as drones. There's a lot of Bullfrog people I'm *really* proud of.

ZONE: So just who is on your team?

PM: Mark Webley, Tim Lance, Steve Jackson (of *Games Workshop* and *Fighting Fantasy* fame), Demis Hababis, and a few other



Cambridge graduates will be coming along soon. It's starting off with lots of people who all get on well together.

ZONE: Have you got a clear idea of what your first project will be?

PM: Very clear. Work started on *Dungeon Keeper* two years ago, but the actual idea is four years old. This new project is more ambitious than *Dungeon Keeper*. Obviously, I can't discuss it yet. I got into terrible trouble discussing *Dungeon Keeper* too soon.

ZONE: You mentioned in an interview last year that you were thinking about basing a game on "everybody's favourite hobby". Is it anything to do with that?

PM: Did you work out what "everybody's favourite hobby" was?

ZONE: Not lacrosse. Could it be 'mating'?

PM: Well, sex is certainly an under-utilised genre in the computer games world. There's *Leisure Suit Larry* and there's *Tomb Raider*, and that's all really. So possibly, yeah.

ZONE: A Doom-style 'shag 'em up' then?

PM: No. It would be a little bit more subtle than that. The reality is that nobody knows what I'm going to do.

ZONE: If you were offered a couple of million pounds to do a Spice Girls game, would you do it?

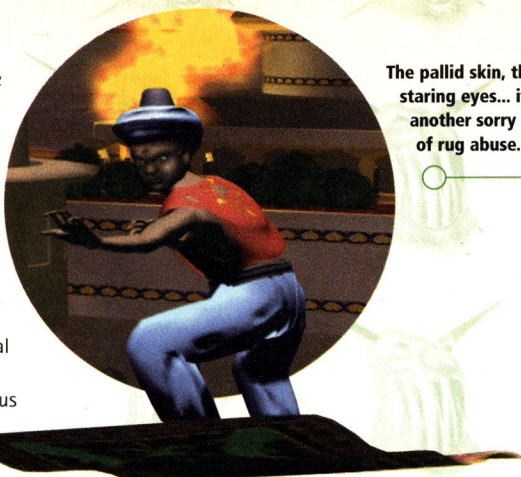
PM: That's a tricky one. I mean, obviously, I'd like to do some research on the Spice Girls game. Extensive research. And that might be fun, but at the end of the evaluation period I don't know if you'd have something worthwhile.

McDonalds wanted me to do a game once. McDonalds, hamburgers – how the bloody hell do you do a game about hamburgers? They wanted me to use all their characters and they were offering this amazing deal, and every kid in the world would play this game – and in that sense it was an interesting opportunity as a way to get a game in front of so many people. I came up with a game design and the McDonalds guy said, "We quite like the game design, but it's got too many sharp edges in it." So I said, "What do you mean by sharp edges?" And he said, "We don't like 'pointy' graphics – everything's got to be smooth, and rounded, and bouncy."

I realised then that this guy didn't really want anyone to design a game. I think it would be exactly the same with the Spice Girls. You could come up with the most brilliant design, but at the end of the day they know exactly

what they want from the game, and they're not going to let you do anything they don't want. It'd be great to use a property if you had complete editorial freedom. So with the Spice Girls game, for instance, you could shoot one of the Spice Girls, or shag one of the Spice Girls – but they're never going to allow that.

God, that's going to be the headline, isn't it? "Peter Molyneux suggests shagging and shooting Spice Girls."



The pallid skin, the staring eyes... it's another sorry case of rug abuse.

(Below) Do you have any idea how many zebras had to die for that sofa?

ZONE: Ever been in a fight?

PM: No. The only fight I've ever been in was when I was 14 or so and I picked on this eight year old kid.

ZONE: That's very cowardly.

PM: Yeah, and I lost. I cried like a baby. That's the only time I've ever been in a physical fight. I'm not built for bravery. It's a Molyneux characteristic. Our coat of arms should have a motto that reads 'Run Away'. I've got something a bit like Peter Parker's 'spidey sense'. A 'spidey fear sense'. It kicks in whenever something even vaguely in the 'bodily damage department' rears its head.

ZONE: Are you afraid of flying?

PM: I don't mind flying, but I don't like heights. I went skiing, but I'd only ski on the really wide pistes. There was a narrow one with sort of 'fally downy things' at either side, and when I got there I'd slow right down and ski like a 90 year old. People were saying, "Peter, look, the edge is fine." But I'd say, "I don't give a f**k what the edge is like. I just don't like it."

I didn't like scuba diving at the start, because it had a fear factor of five. I rate everything for its fear factor. Anything above a 'one' is probably dangerous.

ZONE: So if you had to give yourself a 'cowardice' rating on a Top Trumps card, what would it be?

PM: Out of ten? Ten. No, actually – nine. I do put myself in these situations, but I also make sure I've got a way out.

ZONE: I notice you've got a lot of board games. Which is your favourite? Buckaroo?

PM: Buckaroo's not bad when you're smashed. Actually, no – it's a bit too tense for that. I used to like *Operation*, but nowadays what with them banning

everything, they have to ban *Operation* or the next thing you know you'll have kids pulling out each other's kidneys in the living room.

ZONE: You could make *Operation* into a 'Quentin Tarantino' torture game, cutting off policemen's ears and the like...

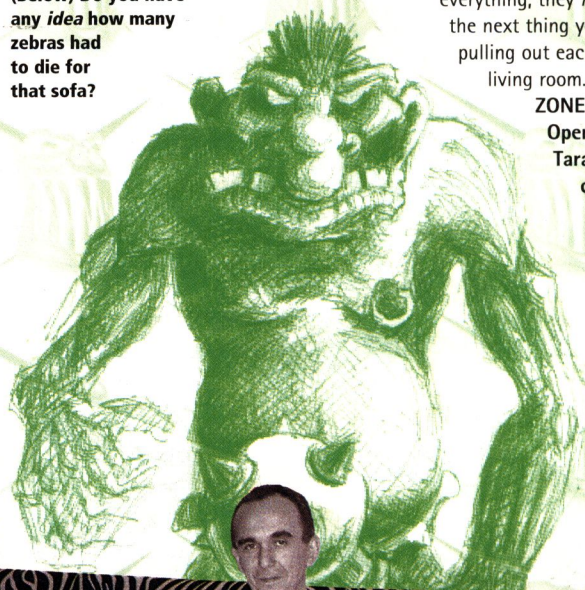
PM: Yes – *Torture-oo*.

"How far can you go with this person before he dies?" But really, my favourite board game is *Diplomacy*. You should try it.

ZONE: We've just run out of space.

Can we take some photos now?

PM: Okay then. 2



"I'd like to do some research on the Spice Girls game."

mIND games

Sigma 1.5T SYSAMRS10C0

Bradley Elwood Gaston
24
Rookie

Sigma 1.5T SYSAMRS10C0

Ok I'm going in.
This place is real
dark I can only
just make out
some packing
cases bearing
256

Sigma 1.5T SYSAMRS10C0

Something's in
the corner.
It's small, scuttling
around. Rats??

Temporal/ memory ☒ emotion ☒

Occipital/ visual ☒

ET:G

R

Frontal/ intellect ☐ planning ☐

Parietal/ sensory motor ☒

Combat-stat* *Active
Psi-Training* *None
Psi -Strength* * *
73.34 s.p.

Sight/ ☒ ☐ 453

Anxiety/ ☒

Sigma 1.5T SYSAMRS10C0

This thing's
heavy-
feeling tired-
should have
gone to bed
earlier last

Synapses +
stimulus/(fear) ☒ ☒

Neurotransmitter Rate
33.56% ☒

Sigma 1.5T SYSAMRS10C0

There! Whats that?
It's a Brainsucker!!
Moving fast
to my left.
AIM!!!

Sigma 1.5T SYSAMRS10C0

Just sweep the TRACKER
across the room...
like they taught us
in training.
Regular sweeps.

ET:G

R

Heart rate/
☒ ☐ (REG)

Cerebral cortex
Stimulus/ ☒

Sigma 1.5T SYSAMRS10C0

Fire two bursts...
aim two more
bursts
aim low-did
that hit??What
a stink!!!!

Directions/
(slow) ☒ ☐

Anger/ ☒

Receptors concentration level...HIGH

night-I'd
better give
Carla a call
when I
get back.

Auditory
function/ ☐
Smell/ ☒

Adrenaline supply/ ☒ ☐

Don't
stand
there
watching it!
Get a bead
on it.

ET:G

R

Auditory/
☒ ☐ (REG)

Smell/ ☒ ☒

Spots of
green gunk!!
...there
gotcha, you
creep. Yeah!

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Where is the body?
Just around this corner-
I think it crawled
into here...
WHAT?
ARGHHH!!!

Sigma 1.5T SYSAMRS10C0 I....don't know... I cannot
move I cannot./...
...0.000 ...0...25...//
3456846...666
3456846...666

ET:G

R

error0%error0%
errorerrorerror
errorerrorerror
errorerrorerror
unknown unknown
unknown
UNKNOWN UNKNOWN
UNKNOWN
HJ658JJJLFG6
7778BVMN.....
transmission end

track us down at
www.microprose.com
but beware of the
brainsuckers! ☒



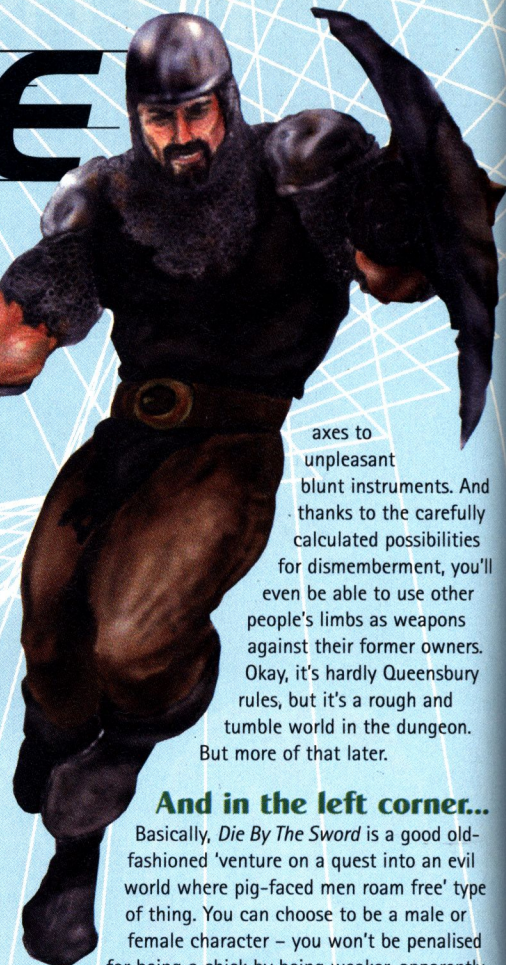
apocaLypse

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



MICRO PROSE

DIE BY THE SWORD



axes to unpleasant blunt instruments. And thanks to the carefully calculated possibilities for dismemberment, you'll even be able to use other people's limbs as weapons against their former owners. Okay, it's hardly Queensbury rules, but it's a rough and tumble world in the dungeon. But more of that later.

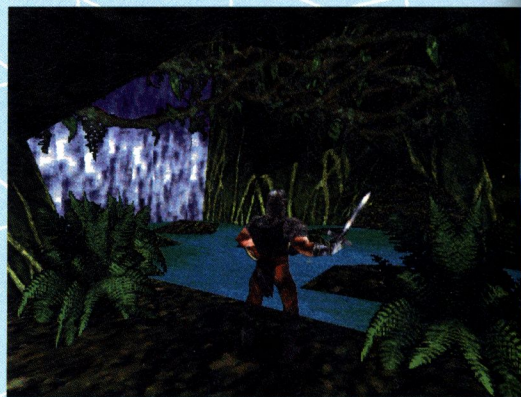
And in the left corner...

Basically, *Die By The Sword* is a good old-fashioned 'venture on a quest into an evil world where pig-faced men roam free' type of thing. You can choose to be a male or female character – you won't be penalised for being a chick by being weaker, apparently, although you will have a smaller sword. Perhaps it works on the same principle as chicks' watches. Or maybe it's a penis envy thing. Then again of course, I could be totally wrong. Using a totally new 3D engine, VSIM (see box on page 42),

Patrick McCarthy used to live in the same road as a Welshman called Dai, who lived opposite a pub called The Sword And Serpent. Often they would pass each other outside the pub, and he would joke about seeing Dai by the... (Oh alright, I think we've grasped what you're getting at – Ed.).

"You'll even be able to use other people's limbs as weapons against their former owners."

you'll have *Tomb Raider*-style freedom to wander where you want. There's a similar puzzly element – levers in certain places open doors, and so on. Some of the levels even look a bit *Tomb Raider*-like – but whereas people complained that



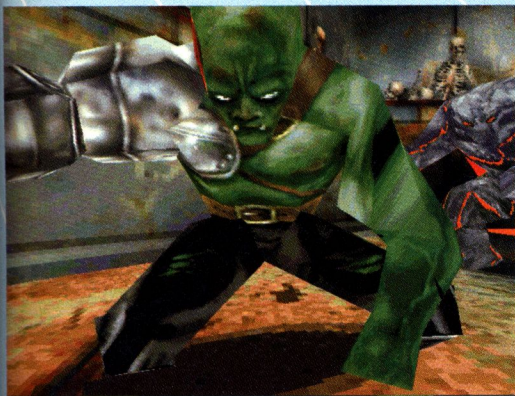
When Larry regained consciousness, he was in the middle of Kew Gardens, wearing a suit of armour. His head hurt and his bottom felt wet.

7

IF YOU'RE A FAN OF *Tomb Raider* and thought it looked good, you're in for a treat with Interplay's upcoming *Die By The Sword*. If you had to sum it up quickly, you'd say it's an action adventure game in the *Tomb Raider* style, with a dollop of *Ultima Underworld* and a large chunk of the PSX's *Soul Blade* thrown in. Except that was a bit of a mouthful.

We're talking hardcore swordfighting action, with weapons ranging from gigantic broadswords, through spears and double-headed

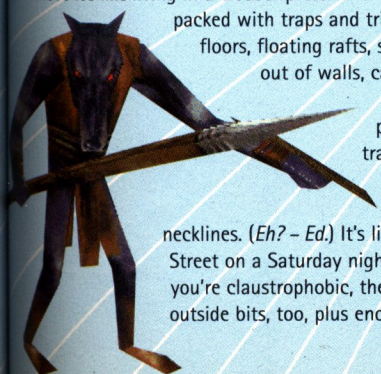




(Top left) "...Well, if I did spill your pint, I can only apologise and offer to buy you a pub... Hahahahaha!... er..." (Above left) Kate Moss and Sophie Dahl off to another A-list party. (Left) Cor blimey, it's The Troggs. (Top) "Ping! Ground floor. Haberdashery, gents' ready-made goods, murderous pig-faced orcs and axe-wielding lunatics in aprons..."

for a large portion of the time in *Tomb Raider* you were just wandering around looking for something to do, in *Die By The Sword* you'll be hoping for a bit of peace and quiet.

The levels are already overflowing with sword-, spear- and axe-wielding bastards – and even some with projectile weapons such as catapults and slings – and all of them are intelligent. The smaller cowardly ones may run away if you approach them, but if you turn your back they'll stick their knives in it. Some may even run away, *Ultima Underworld*-style, and return with reinforcements. The bigger ones just come straight for you, swinging sharp stuff like demonic Swiss army knife adverts. At times there's so little room to move it's like living in a trouser press. And each level will be packed with traps and tricks – collapsing floors, floating rafts, spears shooting out of walls, camouflaged pits, swinging pendulums, rope traps, whirling blades and plunging necklines. (Eh? – Ed.) It's like Peckham High Street on a Saturday night. And in case you're claustrophobic, there'll be some outside bits, too, plus enormous chasms



Product details

Developer: Treyarch Inventions

Publisher: Interplay

Website: www.interplay.com

Release date: October

to leap, walls to climb, dank, smelly pits to fall into... (insert armpit joke of your choice). The upshot is that you don't get too complacent; there may even be slight differences to a level when it's loaded in different games.

And that's magic

In true adventure fashion, there'll be magic potions to heal and do harm, and your skill levels will increase as you progress through the game.

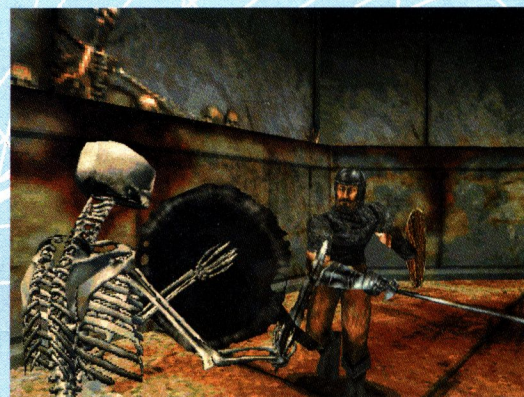
As you become more proficient at handling your sword, you'll inflict more damage with each blow. But thankfully, there's none

of that "You have 13 of Ye Experyense

Points and one point of Sword Wieldeth Quickly At Tummy" business – it all goes on beneath the surface.

Out on a limb

There are several ways to control your character, using mouse and keyboard combinations, and combat is extremely fluid, thanks to the VSIM technology. It's explained in more detail on page 42, but basically it means that if you're standing on



(Right) Yes, a SlimFast diet can give you the figure you always wanted.

Playing on the swings

One of the best features of *Die By The Sword* will be the training mode, in which you can perfect your twirly swordfighting moves against a series of one-off, not especially skilled opponents (and work on your Brian Blessed-style shouts of "Ha-ha-HAAAAH!"). "So what?" you might be muttering. Here's what: you can work out a particularly scary combination of bludgeoning sword-swinging, with fancy footwork à la Ginger Rogers thrown in – and save it. You can then

allocate it to a particular key and, the next time you're cornered in a dark and scary dungeon by four warthog-headed orcs, you can go into your patented berserker fury at the touch of a button. Arms, legs and heads will fly about the screen like a close-up of a Pan's People dance routine (only not quite so stomach-churning). And even if they're all yours because the move has failed completely, at least you'll have the satisfaction of going out in style. (Remember to use that "Ha-ha-HAAAAH!")

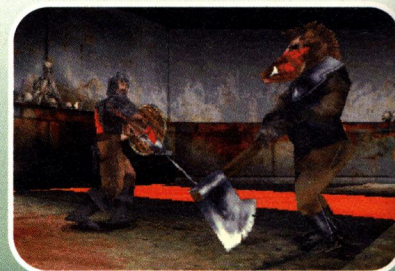




Going through the motions: VSIM

VSIM is what Treyarch's 'Inventions' has decided to call its real-time human motion engine. Why it isn't called RTHME we cannot fathom. As to what it stands for, the best we've managed to come up with is Very Sneaky Inimation Method (though you have to pretend a South African's saying it). What it achieves, and the way in which it achieves it, is all very complicated, but here we go: instead of using motion capturing, VSIM creates character motion from a physical model based on joint articulation modelled by damped oscillators. (Can you tell I copied that bit?)

All the computations involved in the movement of the characters in the game are performed in real-time, in response to the environment, AI and player control. In effect, this means that as well as coping with collision detection, it also accurately models collision reaction – so when you bring your enormous broadsword down on somebody's heavy shield, the shield will move, the impact is absorbed and both objects bounce about accordingly. It also takes physical attributes into account

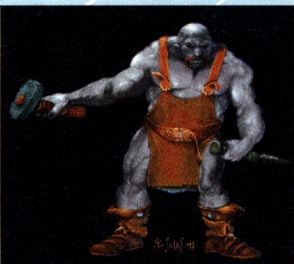


– if what you're hitting is stronger than you are, the maths involved ensures you won't have a great deal of success. But if you bring your trusty broadsword down on an unprotected neck, the head flies off at just the right speed.

It also means character control is more fluid. Instead of relying on loading a series of pre-defined animated sequences, movement is constructed on the fly as you move the controls, with hundreds of parameters defining your character's stance and movement. The good news for you is that you get unique movements and animation, with no pauses while each piece of motion capturing is added. The good news for them is that they get a huge variety of animation from a single engine and can go home from work early as soon as they've finished it.

◀ a slope, you stand up straight. The 'dynamic interaction' means that when a sword hits a shield, both are affected. It all looks highly convincing indeed.

The fact that all characters are fully 3D and polygon-based should provide the most entertainment. Each part of the body is logically calculated and you can aim blows at specific parts. (Your opponents' bodies will be shown on a mini-chart at the top of the screen, so you can see which bits are damaged). If you're accurate with your blows (and confident of surviving their assaults), you can systematically hack



people to bits. You'll witness arms and legs flying off like something out of *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* – and in a similar way, they just keep on coming, dragging themselves with their last arm if necessary. Unfortunately, the same can also happen to you. I lost a leg near the start of one game and had to spend the rest of the game hopping about like a psychotic Zebedee – which, given that you can't re-grow a limb (the magic healing elements don't extend that far), is a bit of a setback for an extensive campaign. I suspect it's going to be a game in which anal-retentive saving before every scrap will be de rigeur. As well as the one-player quest mode, there'll be a one-player tournament mode in the traditional beat 'em up style (take on and beat everyone else in the

game to claim the king's favours, or whatever) and there'll also be multi-player options for modem, network and serial link games. Up to four people will be able to play as any of the 25 game characters, each with their own strengths and weaknesses, physical attributes and intelligence, and it will all be fought out like a cross between *Soul Blade* and *Quake* in an arena, which should be really cool. We've already got our codpieces all shiny in readiness. 7

(Far left) In the initial sketch, the Caleb character always carried his left foot around on some fishing line. (Middle) His mum spent ages doing that piping, so try not to dirty it. (Above) See that shield? He made that all by himself...



(Left) Once a week, before a hot date, Neil would go to the barber's to have his back shaved.

The empire has
fallen... chaos
sweeps the land...
now the mighty
Warlords arise for
the final battle

"Supreme
fantasy
action
game"

PC Gamer
August 1997



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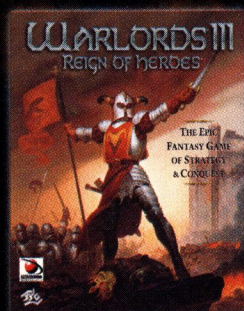


"Dungeon Keeper aside, Warlords has to be one of the most engrossing games this year!"

PC Guide - September 1997

"Put simply, Warlords III has the best AI we've seen this year - and maybe in any year"

PC Gaming World - July 1997



- † Enemies observe tendencies with a powerful AI, then devise unique strategies to decimate you
- † New simultaneous mode reveals each player's action in real-time via Internet, modem, IPX network or e-mail
- † Multiplayer support for up to 8 players through Red Orb Entertainment's dedicated game-matching service, Red Orb Zone™
- † Configurable game options and random map generator let you create unlimited new battle scenarios
- † Detailed graphics, terrains and maps
- † Other new features: Over 80 animated warriors, new spells to cast and many more hero and battle reports than ever before



Prepare for Battle



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PC CD-ROM

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Available August 1997 www.warlords3.com

TONE REBELLION



(Left) The aim of the game (as far as I can tell) is to collect those rune things in order to gain wisdom. (Below top) The large spotlight thing is a 'bridge'. Don't ask. Just trust me on this. (Below middle) Different worlds (and there are a lot in the game) give different challenges. As do different tribes. Each is unique every time you play too, giving the game lasting appeal. (Below bottom) This is a sort of work roster, letting you play 'Grumpy Foreman' to your floaters' 'Hapless Workforce'.

Two months ago we took a brief look at what could be one of the most original strategy games for years. Since originality should be encouraged at all times, we decided to send **Paul Presley** to take a deeper look at the game and the people behind it. (Whatever happened to comedy? – Ed.)

and, while in principle that would be no bad thing, you just know that someone will eventually try to use it for an evil purpose as well.

So it is with games. An innocent idea may sound good at the planning stage, but before long you've got a worldwide hit on your hands and suddenly a million and one inferior clones appear, taking up valuable shop space and conning gullible consumers into parting with their coinage. Need I mention *TekWar*?

The Logic Factory first came to public attention last year with the space-based strategy hit *Ascendancy*. Then, however, they were playing it safe – delivering an impressive game, but in an established genre. *The Tone Rebellion* is a different marine life-carrying water boiler. It's original. Run, run for the hills.

Stop being silly

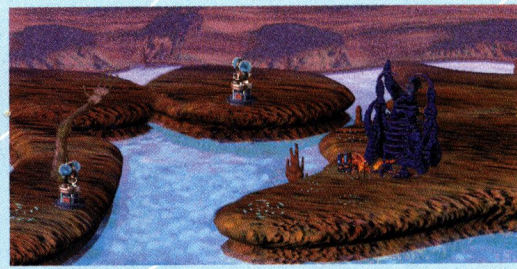
You're right. I'm overreacting. There's nothing wrong with originality itself, just those that abuse its power. I caught up with TLF's co-founder Todd Templeman to judge for myself if they can be entrusted with such a responsibility.

PCZ: For a first-time game *Ascendancy* was pretty damn good. How pleased were you guys with the final product? Todd: We're very proud of *Ascendancy*, but we would have made some changes with hindsight. First of all, we look back and know that had we spent another couple of months balancing it, the game could have been an all-time classic. The AI was fundamentally good, but it's those extra balancing



7

RIGINALITY, AS DAME JUDY DENCH never once said to an assembled crowd in Hartlepool, can be a dangerous thing. Certainly your experiments with nucleonic acids and atom-splitting hardware start out in perfectly good faith: "The betterment of mankind through advanced scientific knowledge!" you cry. But before long you've discovered how to make a bomb the size of a suitcase destroy an area the size of Rochdale



(Above) Okay, let's see if I can 'splain thees, Pedro. That pool thing, that's Tone. The swirly things are where you can build structures. Right, now those odd creatures that are flying and carrying stuff, those are the floaters. They're your 'army', so to speak. Those buildings do different things: some train up soldiers, some educate magicians, others increase your Tone and allow you to see further. Oh, Tone is like a sort of life force that everything is made from. Ah yes, that ugly black thing, that's the Leviathan. He's evil. I told you this was weird.

efforts that make a good engine into a great game. As to the public's impressions, we were surprised to find out that those who were not necessarily the hardest-core gamers thought the game was fantastic. Ninety per cent of our registration card feedback was tremendously positive, though, and we won't make the same mistakes twice. I believe that *The Tone Rebellion* will have the same crossover appeal that *Ascendancy* did, but will have enough real gameplay that the hardcore crowd, on the difficult levels, will tell us that we exceeded their hopes on this one.

Also, with *Ascendancy* the goal was different than with most games. There are five ways to win, some of them based on peace instead of conflict. The number and variety of ships and gizmos were designed to allow hundreds of thousands of combinations that could be used to 'trump' another player's efforts in diabolical ways. And that's how it worked out. Admittedly, there's no need to try unique ship-building combinations, because you could monolithically crush your enemy once you loaded up enough long-range plasmatrons. I would have liked people to try though. Hmm, maybe *Ascendancy II* (with multi-player).

The best reply we got was a letter from an 80 year old man that said: "For the first time in decades I saw the sun come up this morning. You see, I stayed up all night playing your *Ascendancy* game. I wanted to tell you that I haven't been so immersed in anything since 1945 in Augusta, Georgia, at the Apollo Theatre when I saw *Forbidden Planet* for the first time."

PCZ: Octogenarian nerds? Bloody hell. How do you think *Ascendancy* compared to some of the rivals, such as *Masters Of Orion II*?

Todd: I think *MOOI* was a classic, although personally I didn't like *MOOII*. Comparing either one of them with *Ascendancy* is difficult for me because although the concept was similar, the theme, interface and progression through the game was so different. As I've said, the combinations of ships and gizmos possible in *Ascendancy*

was where a lot of the fun was focused, and people weren't as compelled to try that aspect as much as we would have liked. PCZ: You seem to feel quite strongly about this. Why didn't you go straight ahead with a sequel and rectify it?

Todd: We have a small team right now. And while we'll always stay small, we will grow a little bit. As it is, our guys were just too in love with this new idea to go for the bucks on a sequel. But Jason (Todd's brother and TLF's president) has told me, regardless of whether or not the market wants one, that he has a real hankering to just nail an *Ascendancy II*. If we do go for that, it really will be a departure from the first one. I don't yet know how though, because Jason won't talk about it until he's done with *Tone*.

PCZ: So how did *Tone* first come about?

Todd: Mythology, fantasy and dreams.

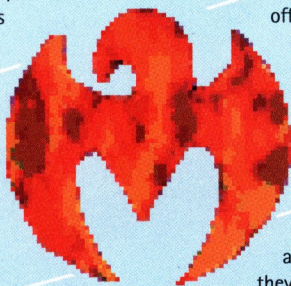
PCZ: Uh huh. Let me try rephrasing that. How many people sat in on the initial design stage?

Todd: All of us in the very beginning, but that soon became rather unproductive. Then it was only Jason and Thomas (Blom, the former director of Development Services at Origin and TLF's other co-founder). They'd often leave the office for a couple of weeks just to concentrate on the real nuts and bolts.

PCZ: The concept for *Tone* is certainly, erm, original. How would you describe it?

Todd: Here's my demo talk: in the beginning existed this island world, floating in the void. On this island existed an innocent and mystical race of floaters, working simply to improve the life of their tribe. They used a magical substance called Tone in everything they did. Tone gave life to all things and was the source of all their energy.

The floaters, having no idea that evil existed, could not possibly understand its awesome potential. Evil did exist, though, in the form of the Leviathan. The Leviathan, once a weak beast hiding from all awareness, also used Tone. In



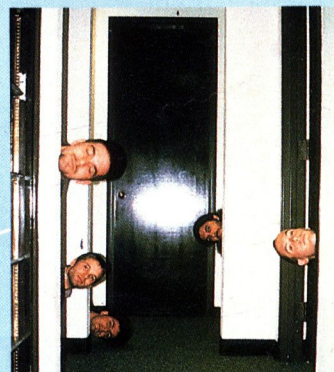
Product details

Developer: The Logic Factory

Publisher: VIE

Website: www.vie.co.uk

Release date: September



(Above) The Logic Factory – half programming team, half '60s music video revivalists. Somebody give these guys a record sleeve and quick.



(Above) They may look extremely evil but they're not. Each of the four basic tribes has a very distinctive feel, and in multi-player games selecting the right strategy for the right tribe can mean the difference between winning and losing. (Talk about state the bleedin' obvious – Ed.)



◀ secret the Leviathan grew strong and jealous to the point where it could no longer tolerate the presence of the floaters or their claim on Tone. In the battle that followed, the Leviathan shattered the island world into fragments.

Time passes and the few remaining floaters, dormant and clinging to a few shards of their former home, evolved or devolved to adapt to their new environment. This is where the game starts, with four tribes, from which the player can choose. You must fight your way to the heart of the Leviathan and, once there, unlock its mystery and reunite the tribes.

PCZ: How advanced is the AI? Do the tribes behave in different ways, have strategies that adapt to your actions etc?

Todd: There's a unique twist in the way the AI works in *Tone*. There are four realms in which you operate. Each floater tribe is dominant in its own realm and secondarily powerful in one other. That also means each floater tribe has a back-door weakness from a certain realm's attack.

This makes it like a large, four-way 'rock, paper, scissors' game in some senses. In multi-player you really are motivated to work together, but sometimes you have to fight each other, and that's when you really hope you've made an ally who can attack the guy who's attacking you. Also, the Leviathan exists in all four realms at once. So, instead of just giving the AI a dumb resource cheat (like being infinitely rich and a whole lot faster than you), its advantage is built into the fiction of the game and appears more organically than most.

I can't tell you anything more about the AI other than it's going to be hot. We have something to prove here and we have the ability to do it.

PCZ: Do you feel *Tone* owes anything to *Ascendancy*, or have you gone right back to the drawing board?

Todd: The only similarity, or should I say exponential improvement, you'll find is in the mood of the game. We've got a full 70-minute soundtrack that I'm 100 per cent sure people will love. So far a heck of a lot of people can't believe what they're seeing and hearing when it comes to beauty and depth of mood. A lot of people thought *Ascendancy* had that and I kid you not – you haven't seen anything yet. But other than the talent and experience that are going into the games, there really is no similarity.

PCZ: So, apart from the setting, how do they differ?

Todd: I can't really count the ways. The only thing I can say is that we will always make clean, intuitive interfaces and will always improve each game to take advantage of improving technologies. But I can't really answer this question because I'd have to

go into describing both games in detail. Ah, except for this: *Ascendancy* took place in space as we conceive it. *Tone* takes place anywhere you think it could. Perhaps in the steam from your cup of coffee.

PCZ: Oookay. So, er, what do you feel you are trying to achieve with *Tone*?

Todd: Nirvana.

PCZ: Hmm. Does the game have any forebears or is it 100 per cent original in your eyes?

Todd: If you hear it from me you won't believe it, but everyone who has seen it after I told them on the phone that it really is totally unique, has admitted that although they didn't believe me at first, they completely agree now. It's classed as a real-time multi-player strategy game and that's a bit misleading. You'll just have to see it

and give it a try.

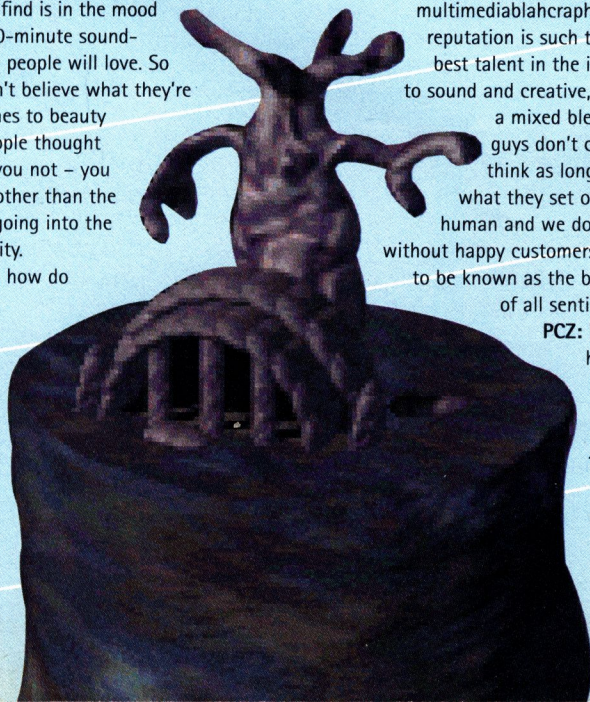
PCZ: You mentioned the music and atmosphere earlier. How important do you consider the presentation of your games compared to the actual content?

Todd: Jason's always told me that they are equal parts of the game. Too many outstanding games have been ruined by poor quality sound and graphics, and too many games have spent too much money trying to impress the world with multimedia lahcrapshotshit. Right now our reputation is such that we have possibly the best talent in the industry when it comes to sound and creative, beautiful graphics. That's a mixed blessing. Fundamentally our guys don't care what other people think as long as they've accomplished what they set out to do. But they're human and we don't get to have our fun without happy customers. In that respect, we want to be known as the best publisher in the history of all sentient species.

PCZ: Well, it's important to have a goal I suppose. Oh, finally, are you aware of what 'floater' means in Britain?

Todd: Actually, no, but I can guess. Oh, shit. Call the localisation department. **Z**

(Top left) The graphics, as you can see, are sumptuous. As is the whole presentation, in fact. (Above) This is a sort of universal map, showing all the islands you can visit and how they're linked. The paths are important when it comes to deciding on strategies.



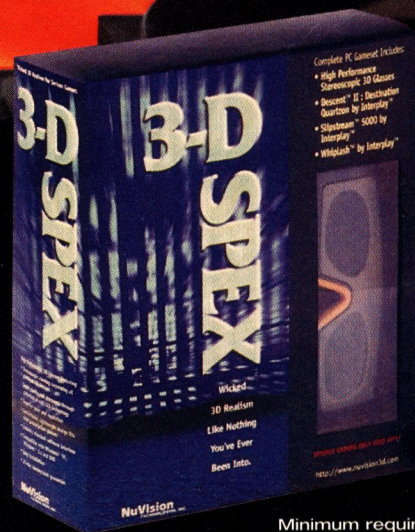
(Above) Some of The Logic Factory's programmers – if you've played *Ascendancy*, you'll know why they're looking so pleased with themselves.

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PCZ

ACTUA SOCCER 2

Like Ronaldo Vs Shearer in Le Tournoi – two titans battling it out for supremacy – Gremlin's *Actua Soccer* has struggled to compete with the marketing might of EA Sports' *FIFA Soccer*. It was always the better game, so what are Gremlin doing to ensure the all-new *Actua 2* kicks *FIFA* into touch?

Jeremy Wells went to investigate.

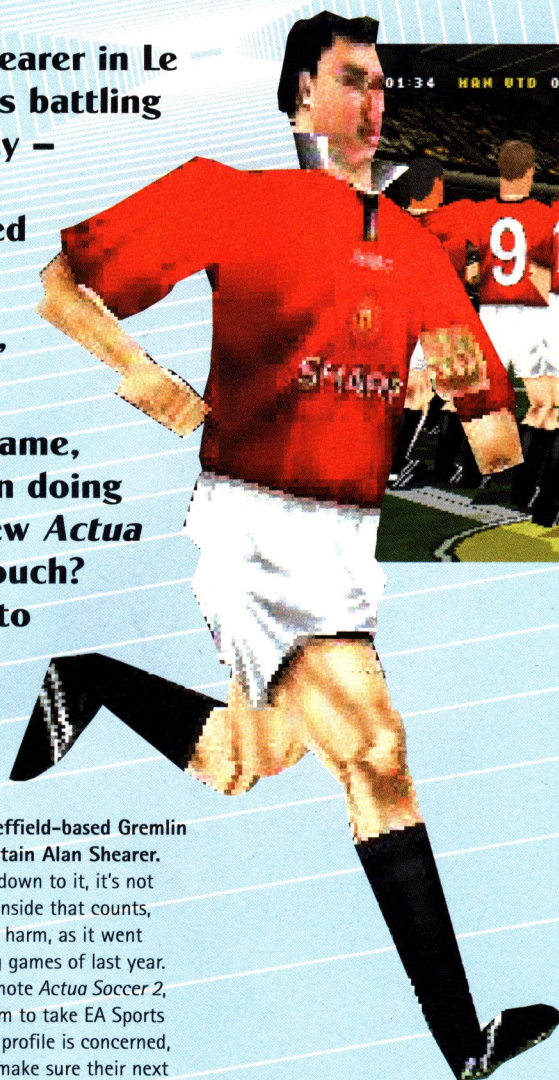
E

A SPORTS MAY HAVE signed up uber-kid Ronaldo to help them promote their next

footie blockbuster, but Sheffield-based Gremlin are fighting back – with England Captain Alan Shearer.

Everyone knows that when it comes down to it, it's not who you've got on the box, but what's inside that counts, although that didn't do *FIFA Soccer* any harm, as it went on to become one of the biggest-selling games of last year. By signing up Alan Shearer to help promote *Actua Soccer 2*, Gremlin have made it clear that they aim to take EA Sports on at their own game as far as product profile is concerned, and they're pulling out all the stops to make sure their next football game can at least try to compete with the *FIFA* branding on equal terms.

Talking to some of the team at Gremlin, you sense a not inconsiderable amount of frustration as far as recognition and sales are concerned. Okay, *FIFA 97* wasn't a bad game – and if you're one of the millions who bought it when it first came out on the Mega Drive all those years ago and have played it ever since, it was, to quote our own review: "The best version yet." But *Actua Soccer*, for its few annoying faults, was a lot better. They know it. We know it. You know it. It's just the chap who knows nothing about games and buys his nephew *FIFA Soccer* every Christmas who remains unwittingly ignorant.



Caught offside

That said, *Actua Soccer* wasn't perfect. The AI was suspect at times, players were unable to stay on their feet, keepers would often roll the ball out to the opposition and the wildly erratic one-touch facility quickly became redundant when used anywhere but in the opposition's box.

When I caught up with producer Ade Carlos at the recent E3 show in Atlanta to see *Actua 2*, he came clean and agreed that the original release wasn't without its faults. "*Actua Soccer* was a milestone product and changed the way people looked at football games, but it wasn't perfect," he admitted.

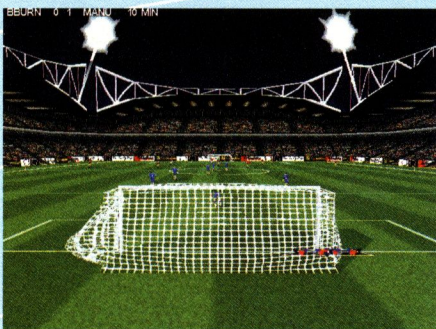
You've got to agree with him, but the question on everyone's lips is obviously going to be something along the lines of: "So whaddaya gonna do about it?"

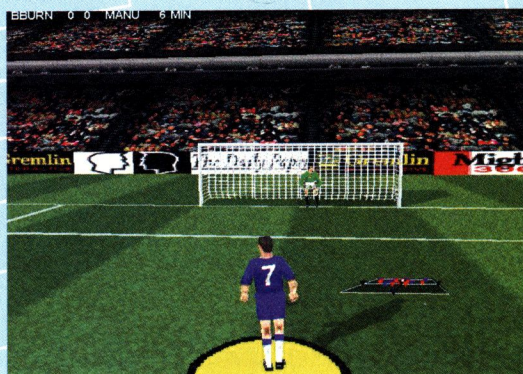
"Actua Soccer was a milestone product and changed the way people looked at football games, but it wasn't perfect."

Euro 96 was a bit of a halfway-house when it came to actual improvements. Graphically, it represented a slight improvement, but the gameplay was essentially the same, so it suffered from the same 'quirks'. I express my concerns to Ade.

He seems used to answering this question. "Well," he says, "we've looked at what everyone else has done with their football games, pulled out all the good bits, improved on them and implemented them into our new code. We've essentially started again with the AI, used more motion capture, upped the resolution and tried to keep the frame rate as high as possible. We've signed a deal with PowerVR, but we'll be supporting other cards and D3D. And, of course, we'll be doing a software-only version. This has allowed us to up

(Far left) The final game will allow you to play as any of the 92 clubs in the English league, at every stadium that hosts a game in the Premier League (as well as a few others). (Left) The weather effects look nice, but so far they don't really affect play.





Product details

Developer: Gremlin (in-house)

Publisher: Gremlin Interactive

Website: www.gremlin.co.uk

Release date: October

the detail level, add some nice new effects, such as rain and snow, and still keep it quick.

"Many of the players – three or four per team – will have recognisable faces – so when Alan Shearer has the ball, if you're in close enough, you'll actually be able to see it's him."

Accelerated play

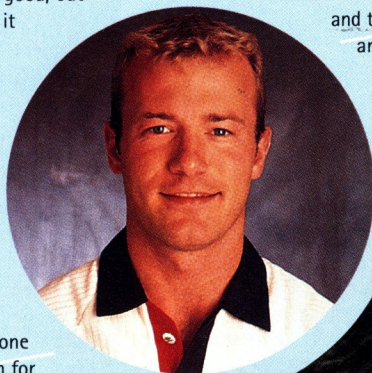
A look at the early code Ade has got running on the machine next to him leaves little doubt that *Actua Soccer 2* will be the best-looking football game to appear on the PC this year.

The accelerated version is obviously completely spooegome, and it was still very quick and detailed when running on software – though admittedly it was on a P200. The original game was certainly playable in low-res mode on a P90, although the hi-res mode of *Actua Soccer Club Edition* does struggle a bit on my P133 with detail set to full. Ade's response to this is: "Well, turn some of the detail off!"

After I've shot him a look that features at least two raised eyebrows and the slightest hint of sarcasm, he adds: "Once we've got everything in, we'll start work on getting the frame rate up. The important thing now is to get everything working properly, which means sorting out the AI and playability. By the time we're looking at release, I'm confident that it'll be quick on a more modest Pentium in 640x400."

There's no denying that *Actua Soccer* looked good, but like most football games, it was the AI that let it down. I ask Ade what they're doing to improve this rather crucial part of the game.

"Like I said before," he says, "we've basically stripped down the AI and started again. We've worked out a new zonal system which responds to the team formation you've selected, so now you have to think more about tactics. We've been testing the code using the old *Kick-Off* top-down view to get the gameplay spot-on. Players now run into space, side-step and shimmy. You can knock the ball into space, do one twos, lobs, cross the ball into the box and go in for headers. Defenders will stand off before they decide to dive in, and run backwards if you run at them, keeping their eye on the ball. You'll even be able to do two-footed tackles. You're going to need a four-button joystick or pad to play



the game properly, but that's not really a problem. We really want the player to feel like they're totally in control of the figure on-screen."

After an hour's play – best of three – I win two-nil in the final with a late goal in the 127th minute (this is early code and I was reluctantly playing Man Utd). I'm starting to get hooked. It's already pretty quick and fluid, despite the fact that the team are still waiting to add loads of new animations.

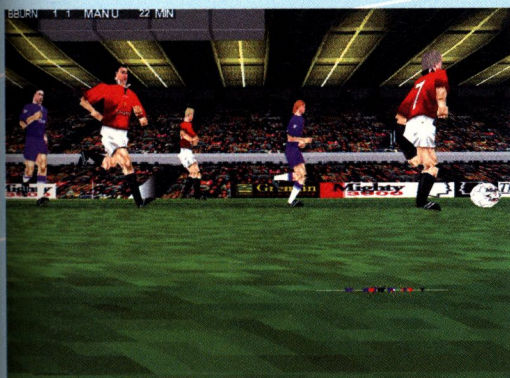
The stadiums and players look great. The clouds, wind, rain, snow and shadows really add to the atmosphere and they've yet to add more of Barry Davies and his new sidekick, Trevor Brooking.

From what we've seen, *Actua Soccer 2* could be the footie game we've all been waiting for. Let's hope Ade and Co finally convince the rest of the world that when it comes to football, British is best. **Z**

(Far left) All the major European leagues – France, Germany, Italy and Spain – will be featured in *Actua 2*, as well as some major club sides from the rest of the world. You'll also be able to play against Alan Shearer's all-time select 11. (Above left) At last... *Actua Soccer 2* will include user-definable competitions, so you'll be able to create your own cups and leagues. (Left) Players will be able to work on tactics, set pieces and corners on the training ground before match day.



(Left) It's Big AI, innit? He's been helping out with motion capturing and acting as 'football consultant'. (Below left and right) Graphically, *Actua 2* is a big step forward. Let's hope the gameplay has come on in similar leaps and bounds, eh?



STARCRRAFT

Blizzard's forthcoming strategy epic is finally nearing completion, and a particularly eager **Chris Anderson** looks at the latest state of play.

T

HINK ABOUT THE REAL-TIME STRATEGY games you've been playing over the last year or two. Think about Warcraft 2, Command & Conquer: Red Alert et al. But what have they all got in common? Well, basically they all give you the chance to take control of one or two sides and then play through a campaign.

In the *Warcraft* games, you've got the Orcs against the Humans. In the *C&C* games, you've got the Allies

against the Nods. Admittedly, you do get different units and weapons depending on which side you choose in any of these games, but how many of them offer units that actually force you to adopt completely different strategies depending on which race (or 'team') you decide to play with? Answer: None.

Which is what makes *Starcraft* so very special. There'll be none of this 'pick a side and wade through a campaign' nonsense in *Starcraft*. Instead you'll get to play three entirely different scenarios, and in each scenario adopt the strategy appropriate for the race associated with it. So you could argue then, that *Starcraft*

"Starcraft represents three totally different games for the price of one."

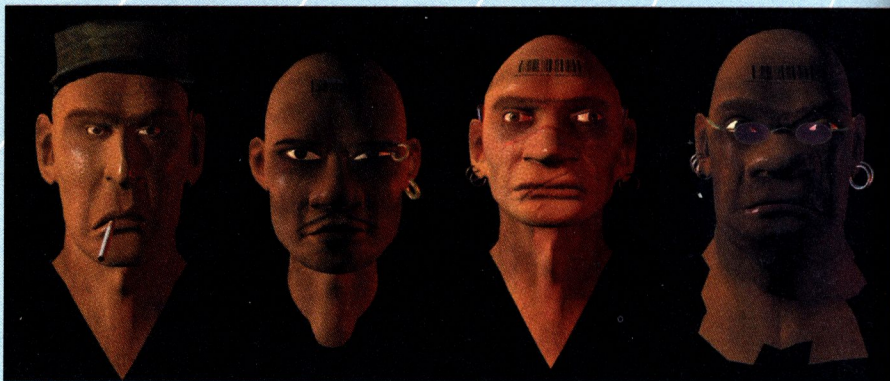
represents three totally different games for the price of one. In fact, the difference in playing styles between the three races is such an important aspect of the game that it warrants closer investigation. To wit, what follows is a breakdown of each race, the technology each of them will be using, and their particular strengths and weaknesses.

(Below) No, it's not the programming team – they haven't got barcodes stamped on their foreheads for one.

(Left) The Zerg possess special powers and the longer they live, the more powerful they become, so look after them.



(Above) As you can see from these screenshots, the artists at Blizzard have been very busy making the units and terrain as detailed as possible. With three different races to model, it's not been a quick and easy process.





The Terrans

These guys, the Terrans, represent the traditional human force most commonly found in futuristic real-time strategy games. Players will be controlling the Terrans for the entirety of the first scenario.

There are two reasons for this:

first, Blizzard didn't want to alienate any newcomers to real-time strategy games by presenting them with tons of weird weapons and technologies. Second, because the equipment the Terrans use is more or less instantly recognisable, this will make the first scenario relatively easy compared to the second two, so it's an ideal place for both newcomers and veterans alike to start.

The Terrans also have several unique attributes that lend them the edge over their enemies. They can deploy Vulture units that can scavenge wreckage for equipment, for instance. They also have a skill called Complex Creation. Put simply, this skill enables the Terrans to use two of the same buildings to create one that's better. So two farms will provide more food, two factories will speed up the building process, two refineries will provide fuel quicker and so on. The Terrans can also booby-trap buildings, making it difficult for the enemy to safely negotiate their terrain – but perhaps of most interest is the ability of some of their units to 'cloak'. This is a skill which makes the unit that's cloaking very difficult to see until the last minute (by which time of course, it's too late).

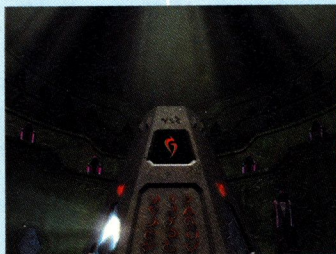
Optioned out

The multi-player options will be many and varied. The most crucial will be the ability to play with other players as part of a team and share resources, tech levels and fog of war information (*Age Of Empires* does this already and as such it's an unbeatable multi-player experience). Players will also be able to set handicaps, so beginners or those who are just plain useless at the game will still have a chance against more experienced/better players. The ranking system currently operational on *Battle.net* will be in place for *Starcraft* too, except it will be even better (apparently).

(Above) Players will have to adopt quite different strategies in order to progress through the game as they control different races.

Product details

Developer: Blizzard
Publisher: Sierra/CUC
Website: www.sierra.com
Release date: November



(Right) The Terrans will be able to salvage wreckage for equipment, merge units to speed up production processes and set booby traps. They'll also be able to 'cloak', which should come in handy.



The Protoss

The most important building as far as the Protoss are concerned is the Nexus. This provides juice, which in turn provides energy for all the Protoss buildings and units. Without this energy the Protoss will cease to function. Conversely, this makes playing the Protoss scenario very different

indeed to the other two, as the player has to constantly prioritise how much time to allocate to looking after the Nexus, while also making sure all the buildings and units have sufficient energy. Not only that, but you will also have to gauge how much you should spend on getting on with the task at hand, ie removing the other two races from the face of the planet. The Protoss can use Pylons to extend the range of the juice from the Nexus, although expansion is made all the more difficult as the player has to ensure there's always a constant link to his base. The Protoss also have shield-recharging structures to support buildings, which makes it very difficult for opposing players to break them down.



The Zerg

The Zerg have a biological mesh called the Creep which surrounds all their buildings. The Creep can be extended by moving larvae around or by laying down more buildings. No other species can build on the Creep, and all Zerg buildings except the Hatchery must be built adjacent to the Creep (the

Hatchery is where new Zerg units come from). All Zergs have certain abilities and powers, but the player can hatch a Zerg prematurely, thus sacrificing certain powers or skills, but bringing the new Zerg into action quicker. The Zergs also have an odd ageing process – the longer they stay alive in the scenario, the stronger they get, so it pays to be protective of your stronger Zerg units. Another big bonus for this race is that they are the only ones whose buildings and units regenerate over time. Night vision is also unique to the Zergs, and this makes them particularly deadly once the sun goes down. They even have burrowing units, and although I haven't seen this in practice yet, I would imagine the ability to disappear and then pop up behind enemy lines before your opponent knows what's going on would be very handy indeed.

And now we wait...

And so ends our analysis of the weird and wonderful species that inhabit the *Starcraft* universe. From the code we've seen this month, it appears to be shaping up very nicely indeed. Of course, the most important element is the AI. Blizzard maintain that they've been working on it since the year dot, and *StarCraft* will represent a benchmark in real-time strategy games. We'll tell you if they're right in a couple of months time when we get our hands on some reviewable code. So far though, it looks like we could be in for a treat. **Z**



HEROINE KILLS...



IAN LIVINGSTONE'S
DEATHTRAP
Dungeon

EIDOS
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FIGHTING FORCE

Part Two

Ever wondered why every game that's come out of Core Design lately seems to feature the most impossibly proportioned women? **Paul Presley** knew there was something he was supposed to ask them when he chatted to their programmers.

A QUICK RECAP THEN. FIGHTING FORCE IS Core Design's new totally 3D beat 'em up action game that allows you to have Tekken-style characters running around a completely open Tomb Raider-style environment – and yet everyone is calling it Fighting Forces. Despite the lack of plurality anywhere in the title. Sorry, but accuracy counts. Just ask Mr and Dr Spocks.

Three men – Roberto Cirillo, Mac Avory and David Long, are looking after the bulk of the work, assisted by a team of artists, programmers and sundry hangers-on. However, since I'm easily intimidated by large groups, I decided to stick with just the main three.

PCZ: Who came up with the initial idea for the game?

David Long: I used to play *Streets Of Rage* a lot and I just had the idea of doing it in 3D.

Roberto Cirillo: It was actually me and you.

DL: Well, actually we all just had a big sit-down at Core, discussing game ideas and that was the one I came up with. The other idea they were all on about was *Tomb Raider*, which shows how far back we're going.

RC: At the time there were a lot of fighting games around, and while they looked nice and all that, after a while you see a formula where it's all the same. Always the same animations, always the same stuff you can do...

Mac Avory: Plus they're not really 3D games. People are always saying that they've got these 3D fighting games, but all you can actually do is go left and right; you can't turn around in 360 degrees.

PCZ: Who's responsible for the main characters?

RC: I came up with the first ideas and then we all redesigned them a few times. We also had some external input from different people, and eventually we just merged everything we had and kept all the good bits.

PCZ: What sorts of things did you take out?

RC: Little things like with Hawk, for example. He was okay, except he just didn't look rough enough. He was like a nice-looking model, same movements and everything, but he looked like too much of a nice guy. This version is much rougher. He wears an open shirt, nothing underneath it, that sort of thing. Also, Smasher originally had green hair. He was supposed to be a very out of this world, mad, mad person.

PCZ: What about the female characters? After the success of *Lara Croft*, were you under pressure to make them sexier, with more cleavage and so on?

RC: Definitely. You couldn't have a female character in a game if she didn't look sexy, didn't have nice hair, a nice body, nice bouncing... how shall I say it?

PCZ: Breasts?

RC: Yes, breasts.

PCZ: Even with Alana? According to the character bio she's only supposed to be about 17, but she still looks like a sex bomb.

RC: Well, you do get those kinds of girls in real life who don't want to appear as young as they really are.

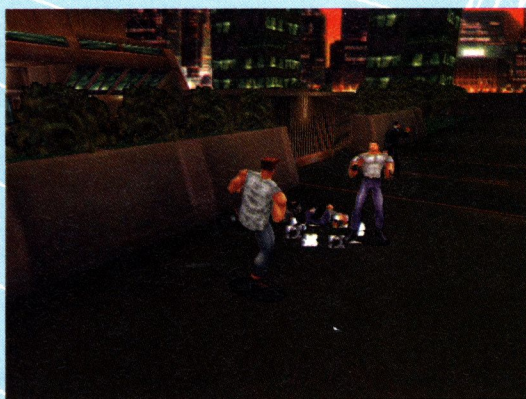
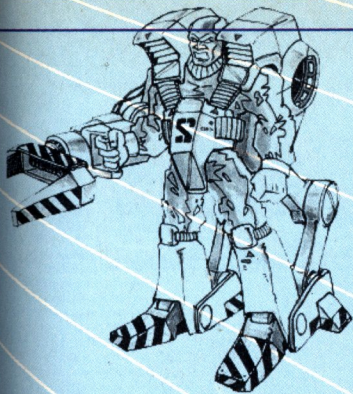
PCZ: So *Fighting Force* isn't just a game then,



The evil Dr Zeng, based on the Big Tripper Timothy Leary who recently slipped off this mortal coil.



Hawk delivers one of his superb chop-suey high kicks, and without splitting his denims. Meanwhile, one of the Men In Black referees. Is that a drop shadow, or are these really Subutteo players?



Product details

Developer: Core Design

Publisher: Eidos

Website: www.core-design.com

Release date: September

At present there are nine types of kick, eight types of punch, six generic miscellaneous moves, four grabs and two defending moves available to each character at the basic level.

but also a biting social commentary into the bargain?

RC: Actually, when we started the game we were only supposed to have one girl. The plot was about this mad scientist with an exo-skeleton called Bob. But then they [Core] wanted two girls in the lead, two women and two men, so we put in the scientist's daughter. I guess it was to make things level for a change, so as not to discriminate.

DL: Yeah, usually you just have the token female. They just put one in and say, "There you go, there's your woman."

RC: And of course, they both look nice.

PCZ: Off the top of your head, how many ways are there to kill someone in the game?

RC: Whew... you want a number? I don't think we've

actually calculated it, but there are quite a few. Thing is it's always changing.

DL: You can throw tyres at people - that'll kill them. Or you can throw broken monitors, or knives or swords, which you can hit them too. You can punch and kick, whack 'em around the head...

RC: As many as you can think of probably.

DL: Basically, every time we put in a new object, that's another item you can use to kill somebody.

PCZ: Are you still inputting ideas or have you said 'enough is enough'?

RC: Oh no. We're still putting in loads of ideas.

PCZ: What are your personal favourites?

DL: I suppose the rocket launcher is mine.

RC: The rocket launcher is a nice, quick and very nasty way to die.

DL: Yeah, if there's a group of bad guys, say four of them, you just fire a rocket into them and they all fall down.

PCZ: Did you carry out any real-life research into the weapons?

RC: As in having a fight downtown after a few drinks? (Laughs.) I suppose we did do some research in the sense of watching some movies and so on.

DL: But no, we certainly didn't go around beating people up or anything even remotely like that.

PCZ: What about the characters' moves? How much research went into them?

RC: We try to thoroughly explore the game so that we can discover all the different situations and circumstances you can find yourself in. So if suddenly, instead of the usual straight fights, you need let's say a 120 degree move or you'd be dead, we can put that in. We make it easier for you by trying to give you as many moves as you'll need, but no more.

PCZ: How hard was it to create the fully 3D environment?

MA: Code-wise it's been a bit of a nightmare. I mean, if you look at some of the other arcade-style games, like *Die Hard Arcade* for instance, I class that as a 2D game because you can only move left, right, up and down. Therefore the coding task is a lot simpler because they've imposed restrictions on themselves. With something like *Fighting Force* there aren't any restrictions.

You can walk anywhere you like in the environment.

PCZ: What kind of problems have you encountered in making it all work?

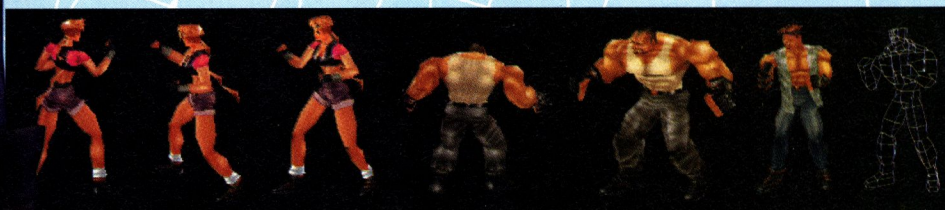
MA: Just the fact you've got enemies floating around in 3D causes lots of problems. We've had to write some pretty scary routines!

You get situations where you throw an object at a bad guy, he gets knocked back and bumps into another bad guy, who bumps into another one, who bumps into a wall. Then he bounces off the wall, bumps back into the bad guy that hit him, who hits the one that hit him, who bounces forward and hits you. Our code has to be able to cope with that sort of situation, whereas in other games it isn't even a possibility.

PCZ: How flexible is the structure of the game? Are you able to adapt and change things as you go along or do you have to stick rigidly to the set plan?

RC: What usually happens is that you'll want to modify something; you'll write it down and in your mind it would be a good idea and it should work. But then you find that you didn't think about something else and that it won't work with this or that. Most of the time though, you can get around a problem. It's very, very rare that you just have to forget about an idea because it won't work.

PCZ: Okay chaps, so far we're dead impressed. Let's just hope that it lives up to everyone's massive expectations. Z



Hawk Manson: Another reference to a '60s cult figure? Could be...

Each character also has between one and four '360 degree' attacks, a special 'bonus' move, individual post-grabbing attacks, elaborate throwing moves and a series of 'floor' attacks.

FLIGHT SIM 98



Since he's just learned to drive, **Dave Mathieson** reckons he's a bit good at steering things. As Microsoft haven't released the Wood Green scenario disk for their *Small, Reasonably-Priced Family Car Simulator 98* yet, we've given him a game about planes instead.



IFTEEN YEARS AGO, MICROSOFT WERE known for two things – DOS and Flight Simulator. Flight Simulator was one of the first proper PC games, and it gave bored office types the chance to pretend they were flying a light aircraft over New York instead of getting down to some 'proper' work.

The graphics consisted of a blue rectangle (the sky) on top of a green rectangle (the ground) and some dials. The objective of the game was to make sure that the green rectangle didn't fill up the screen for too long, as this would cause a flashing orange rectangle to appear and a farting sound to come out of the weedy PC speaker.

Oh, all right then, that's a bit harsh, but by modern standards the graphics were a load of cack.

Given that



If you're flying to San Francisco, be sure to wear a helmet on your hair. If you do want to go there, *Flight Sim 98* will help you avoid all those scary blokes with leather caps and big moustaches.

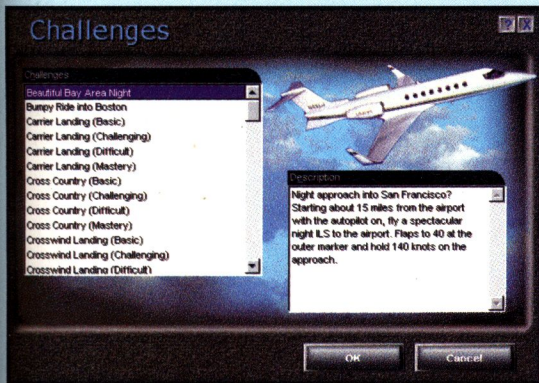
the game had to run on crappy PCs that ran at 1MHz (or something like that anyway), and that the flight models were pretty accurate, people at the time quite rightly thought it was pretty good stuff.

Of course, these days PCs rock, going from stuffy business machines to games platforms *par excellence*. Flight sims in particular have always been popular on PCs, to the extent that very sad people build entire cockpits around them and, sporting beergut-hugging G-suits and greasy-hair moulding helmets, live out their Tom Cruise delusions.

Rather than trying to compete with the shitloads of military sims out there, Microsoft have stuck to their original formula of ultra-realistic simulations of civil planes combined with plenty of exotic scenery to fly over. *Flight Sim 5* was their first effort to use texture-mapped scenery and it set the standard for all other sims to follow. Since then, of course, we've had games like *Flight Unlimited*, *EF2000* and *Flying Corps* that use textures to make themselves look more lovely.

You don't just get to fly dead modern planes – there's a Camel in there, too. With no guns. Boo!





While the number of dials is pretty scary, there's plenty of on-line help to take the edge off those terrifying journeys into the unknown.



Product details

Developer: Microsoft
Publisher: Microsoft
Website: www.microsoft.com
Release date: TBA

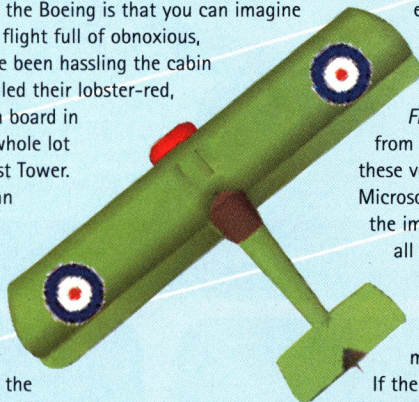
Fluffy clouds

Microsoft haven't been sitting around doing nothing though, and *Flight Sim 98* comes with new planes, tarted-up graphics and, most importantly, support for 3D hardware acceleration. After about two years of promises, crap software support and general arsing about, 3D hardware has finally started to sneak into PC games. Since Microsoft have been trying to lead the way in this area with their Direct3D system, it's not surprising that *Flight Sim 98* is designed to take advantage of said hardware. What this means is that the graphics in *FS 98* are stunning. The photo-realistic scenery looks amazingly lifelike, the clouds are all lovely and wispy and, at night, the stars romantically light up the whole view. If you're lucky enough to have a reasonably ninja PC and you've got a 3Dfx card, the whole lot should roll by in a decidedly unjerky fashion – and even if you don't, there are plenty of adjustable detail settings, so you should be able to reach a compromise.

Fans of hardcore Russian-killing action will probably think this all sounds a bit boring, because *FS 98* doesn't feature any weaponry. But in common with earlier versions, there are plenty of planes to fly, from little Cessnas through to the posh executive LearJet and right up to a Boeing 737.

The great thing about the Boeing is that you can imagine you're piloting a charter flight full of obnoxious, beered-up tossers who've been hassling the cabin staff ever since they hauled their lobster-red, Union Jack-clad arses on board in Tenerife, and crash the whole lot of them into the NatWest Tower. Far more worthwhile than shooting down a couple of MiGs, I reckon.

FS 98 is also the first time a helicopter has been featured, and flying the Bell JetRanger is a great way to take in the sights – and land on them. Flying choppers isn't easy, and *FS 98* accurately models the distinctly unintuitive controls, with no easy arcade mode where you remain at a constant altitude no matter what you do to the stick.



Huge and throbbing

But the biggest improvement over previous versions is the sheer size of the whole thing. There are now over 3,000 airports – ten times as many as its predecessor – and 45 new cities. While the *PC Zone* offices don't feature heavily in the London scenario, I took off from City Airport and flew up the Thames to central London, past the Canary Wharf tower, over the Queen's big house and up to the set of grey squares representing our hallowed workplace, and very pleasant the experience was too.

But if all this scenery isn't enough to keep you going, Microsoft have also included new adventures – a load of preset 'missions', peppered with emergencies and drunken

air-traffic controllers issuing mad instructions (maybe not, then), all aimed at keeping you on your toes. For even more realism, there's support for force-feedback joysticks, so you'll need to grip your throbbing stick firmly, etc etc, and there's also support for special 'sweat helmets' that trickle water down your forehead in particularly tense moments.

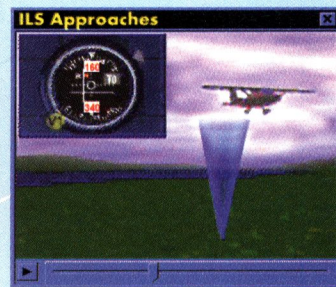
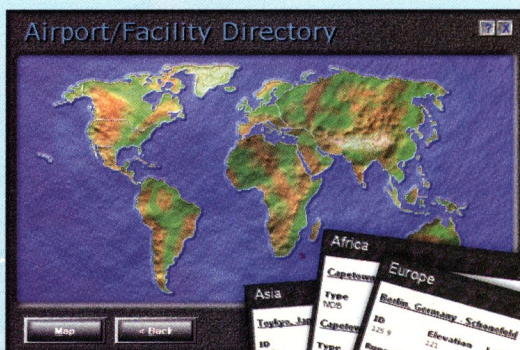
“There are now over 3,000 airports – ten times as many as its predecessor – and 45 new cities.”

Even without a force-feedback stick, there's throbbing aplenty from the improved sound engine, with a host of new sounds, including some slightly worrying roaring wind. The engine sounds have been improved as well and there's a new photo-realistic cockpit too.

All mod cons

Flight Sim 98 looks more like an evolutionary step up from earlier versions than a completely new game. Since these versions were so brill, it would be pretty stupid for Microsoft to throw everything away and start again, and the improvements to *FS 98* bring it bang up to date. As with all graphically pretty games, though, there's always the potential jerkiness question. Since the alpha version we looked at wasn't optimised in this department, you'll have to wait until next month's review for more on this particular aspect.

If the improvement using 3D hardware is as big as it is for some of the other games we've seen, *Flight Sim 98*'s graphics will be awesome. Combine this with the other improvements and it'll be 'play until your eyes bleed' time for sim-heads everywhere. **Z**



Make sure you avoid those ground-based cone laser batteries, like this plucky little fella.



The Bell JetRanger is the first time Microsoft have featured a chopper, and very nice it is too.

INTERNATIONAL RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Steve Hill slips on a pair of fawn leather driving gloves with popper fasteners and airtex backs. This is a man in total control of his vehicle.

T

HERE'S A NEW VERSION OF RALLY COMING out. And hold onto your hats, because this one's slightly different! Last year's irksomely titled Network Q RAC Rally: Rally Championship was released to much critical acclaim and went on to linger endlessly in the middle region of the charts with all the tenacity of Meatloaf's execrable *Bat Out Of Hell* album. Network Q was actually the third instalment in the series – and the first to merit any cop, which makes you wonder what improvements we can possibly hope to see in this, the inevitable fourth offering in the series.

The first noticeable difference is the loss of the official licence as the RAC have since withdrawn their name from the project. So, after being told last year that the licence was a good thing because it guaranteed the authenticity of the tracks, its absence is now deemed a good thing too as it will allow for more flexibility and imagination in the course designs. Confronted with this kind of doublespeak marketing gibberish, the words 'arse' and 'absolute' spring readily to mind, though not necessarily in that order.

Nevertheless, there is a major difference in the courses, largely due to the addition of a track editor, which will no doubt appeal to DIY enthusiasts everywhere. It works in two different ways, catering for people with varying degrees of spare time and patience. For those with limited social avenues, there's an option to painstakingly build your dream track inch by inch; while the man in a hurry can enter a list of parameters and features and leave the landscape generator

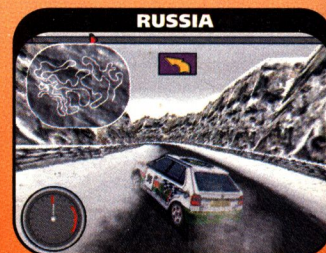
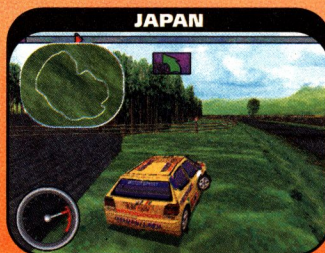
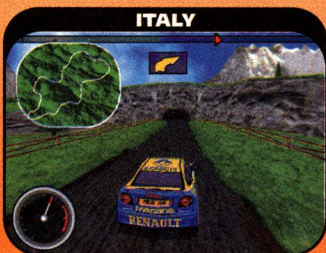
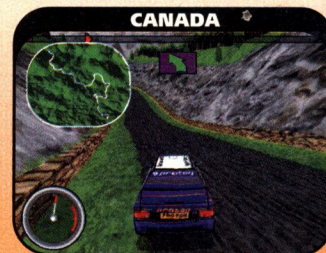
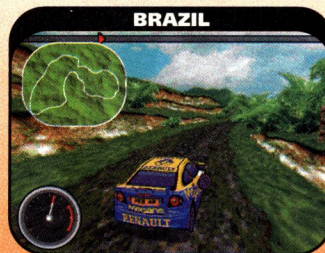
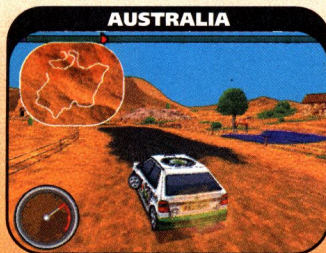


The Streets Of San Francisco. Not really, it's *International Rally Championship*, or *Rally 4*, if you will.



International track attack – no passport required

The aptly named *International Rally Championship* comes with no less than 15 spectacular courses, each set in a different country. So what have we done? Only superimposed a map of each track onto a screenshot of the relevant course. Clever eh? Don't say we never do nothing for you.



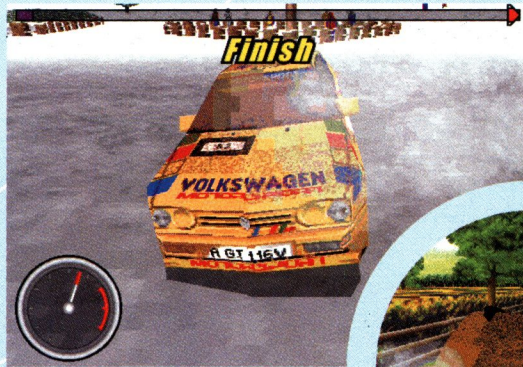


to do the rest. Once a new track has been created, it is then assigned a unique password for use at a later date. This opens the door to countless opportunities for the trading of designs, and it can only be a matter of time before we see homemade tracks being swapped over the Internet. Well, that's the theory, anyway.

Jungle is massive

For those who really can't be bothered with that sort of messing about, there are 15 default tracks to choose from that span a variety of nations, hence the 'International' bit in the game's title. These tracks encompass five different scenarios, namely snow, countryside, alpine, desert and jungle, all of which affect the handling of the car. To this end, each car can be accurately set up in terms of suspension, steering and so forth, with a comprehensive assortment of tyres available for different terrains and various weather conditions. A virtual Halfords could make a killing here selling halogen fog lights for the night-time racing slots, not to mention other boy racer accoutrements.

One thing *Rally 4* (as I'm allowed to call it, being 'in the trade') does have in common with the kind of wispy-tached teenage morons who drive round in circles for hours on end is a selection of pounding tunes, is the option to select one of six CD tracks before each race. The music had yet to be added to the copy we reviewed, but the names of the tunes were already in place, and they would appear to be something of a mixed bag. As song titles go, *Buckets* is fairly ambiguous, *Energize* sounds potentially dubious and *Rock Show* promises to be downright awful. *Miles And Miles* is presumably standard driving fodder, *Punkture* (clever wording, cheers) might offer some credibility, but *Disco Dick* frankly



beggars belief – and that's before we've even heard it. We await the finished results with unabated breath.

Got a new motor?

As for the cars themselves, there are nine in total, including the Ford Cosworth, natural habitat of Essex Man, although this version comes without the standard-issue fluffy

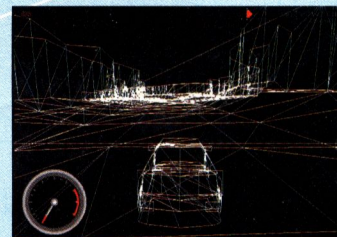
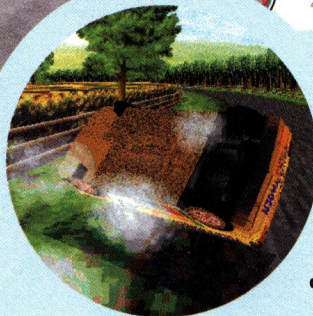
“For those with limited social avenues, there's an option to painstakingly build your dream track inch by inch.”

dice and windscreen-mounted legend. Also up for grabs is a Volkswagen, a Proton, a Subaru and a Skoda, the butt of all those hilarious jokes a few years back. Two viewpoints will be utilised: a first-person affair and the standard chase view, enabling you to get a close look at your car and its colourful livery. Incidentally, the stickers are for advertising. It's as simple as that. It really is that simple.

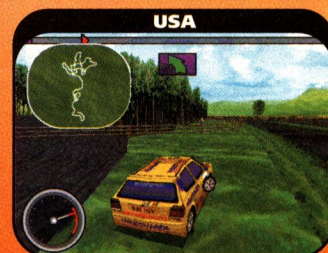
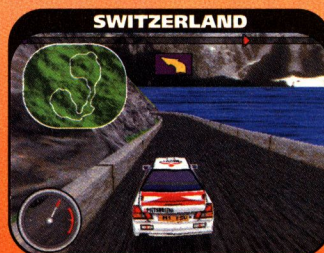
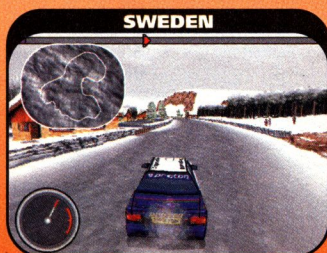
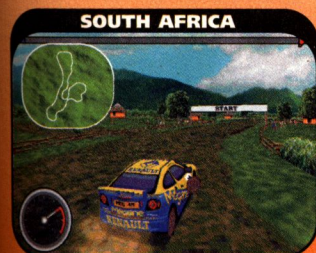
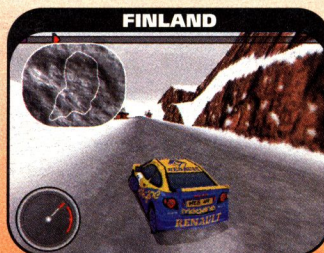
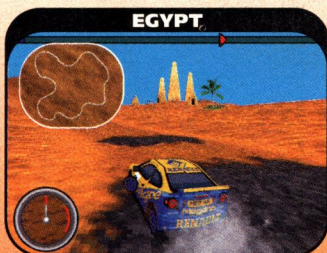
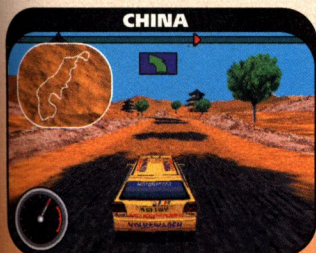
Rally 4 claims to have five different modes of play. Arcade involves driving like a nutter to make the various checkpoints while negotiating other cars – massive collisions result in a quick spin and the loss of a few seconds. Simulation is slightly more realistic in that you're competing against 99 other cars, although being a rally, it's pretty unlikely you'll actually see any of them, although there is potential for some spectacular crashes. Time Trial is a straightforward ▶



(Far left) A pleasant lakeside drive.
(Middle) That'll be the Volkswagen then.
(Above) Snow and everything.
(Left) Now you didn't really want to go and do that, did you?



That's what you call a wireframe. Naturally, the finished version will look more colourful.





Product details

Developer: Magnetic Fields

Publisher: Europress

Website: www.europress.co.uk

Release date: September



◀ point-to-point affair enabling you to set records for the various courses; it features an optional ghost mode, which has nothing to do with ghosts but involves a pretend



car that you pretend to race against in order to break the record (which is of course a pretend record because

it's a pretend game – pay attention at the back there, please). Custom mode presumably allows you to set up the amount of detail you want, while Championship offers the full monty (whatever that is), including refuelling mode.

Hey Goo, what's new?

If you're a big fan of the previous incarnation of *Rally* (and have persevered this far with my uncharacteristically turgid prose), you may wish to be enlightened on a few more of the differences between the two games. Well you're in luck, because *PC Zone* are honoured to be in possession of nothing less than... a piece of paper with a list of differences. "Titles in 16-bit 800x600," it screams. "In-game graphics 800x600, 640x480, 320x240," it yells with gusto. "Textures and sprites improved," it mutters, drawing a quick breath. "Scenery more versatile," it offers, almost apologetically. And there's more! Improved features: tunnels, terraced houses, suspension bridges, various in-game objects such as houses, temples, pyramids, churches, barns etc. Totally revamped front-end/

options to give the game a better structure. New in-game options and 3D card support. AWE64 support, and even support for force-feedback joysticks, for Christ's sake.

And still it comes. Split-screen: two players on one computer. Serial link. All game modes available in multi-player. Tracks can be flipped and/or reversed. Replays can now be edited/sections saved. Tracks are now circuits and point-to-point. Improved handling/crashes. Wider tracks enabling off-road driving. Somebody stop me.

Right, that's it. End of. Job done. If you want to know anything else about *International Rally*, you can either just check out the Website, or alternatively wait for the exclusive review and demo that will be gracing the pages of your life-affirming *PC Zone* in the near future. 2

(Main) It's that fancy Volkswagen again, tearing through a tunnel. (Above) The serenity is shattered by a belching automobile.

Get outta the way, you motion!

Anyone who has watched rallying on television cannot have failed to notice that the sport apparently attracts a curious type of spectator. Usually Welsh or just plain stupid (although the two terms are largely interchangeable),

there's always a clutch of people who have planted themselves in the most unsuitable place, clearly endangering their lives just to 'get on the telly,' as if this represents some kind of achievement in their otherwise humdrum existence. These days, with Andy Warhol's "famous for 15 minutes" prophecy being rapidly realised, not getting your mug on television presents almost as



big a challenge, yet still these cretins stand on the outside of a bend – inches from fast-moving, potentially unstable vehicles – gurning at the camera as if it were some kind of King Of Space. Back to *Rally 4*, and there they are

again, rooted to the pavement as if protected by an invisible force-field. And unfortunately, this is indeed the case. Despite claims of 'off-road driving', there is no *Carnageddon*-style method of administering much deserved grievous injuries, thus removing these fools from an already crowded gene pool. Still, you can't have everything. Maybe someone will write a patch. Cheers then.

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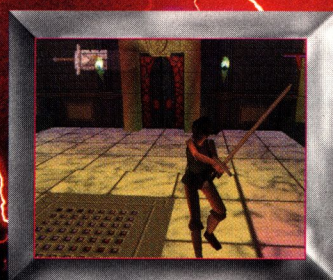
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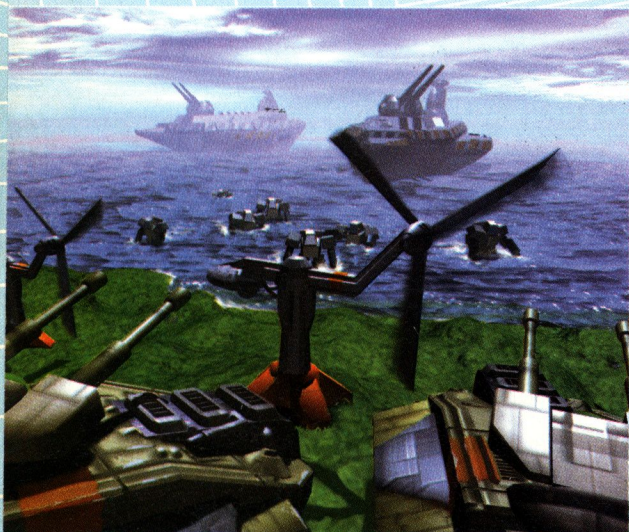
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Developed by Fish (UK) Ltd. Designed by Tempest

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TELSTAR

TOTAL ANNIHILATION



Considering the title, *Total Annihilation* is hardly likely to be a *Teletubbies* tie-in, is it? Lie down and brace yourself as **Charlie Brooker** gives you a good hard talking-to about an exciting-looking strat 'em up from the team at Cavedog Entertainment...

W

hat's this? Command & Conquer clone number 6,008? Well, yes. But before you think about hurling your flabby, friendless carcass out of the nearest window, listen up – *Total Annihilation* looks pretty damn good.

Perhaps – just perhaps – it could even be better than the games it has been 'heavily influenced' by. It received a fair amount of attention at E3 – enough for the publishers to treat it as a Triple 'A' product (see panel, page 64).

So what's so damn special about this game? Number one, it's all filmed in Super-Three-Dimension-o-Scope. Every single unit in the game has been lovingly tooled from the finest high-resolution polygons, which doesn't really sound like a big deal until you see them for yourself in motion. They represent a significant improvement, and after witnessing *Total Annihilation* first-hand, it's doubtful you'll ever want to control a C&C-style 2D sprite again.

What's more, the terrain over which your troops move is fully contoured, instantly opening up a big fresh boxful of tactics. Certain units, such as the neat 'Spider' bots, are especially adept at clambering over the steepest inclines, whereas others (such as bulkier tanks) aren't.

Hills provide cover from line-of-sight weapons, forcing your opponent to attack with projectiles (which may or may



(Above & right) The fully contoured terrain not only looks pretty, but it will affect the way you play the game too. Hills are more easily defended, while trees offer cover.

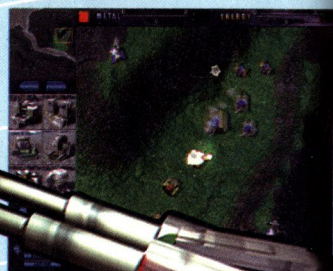
not be a good thing). The contours even extend below the water margin – larger ships, for instance, won't be able to hug the shoreline because the underwater reef will prevent them from getting too close.

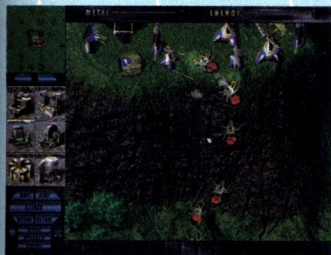
There is also an impressive number of different units waiting to be employed – 175 to be precise – with weekly downloadable additions promised following the game's release. And they're not simply 175 pulse-terminating variations on your common-or-garden tank, either. Aside from the Spiders, there are fighter jets, *Mechwarrior*-style assault robots, aircraft carriers, even a 'walking bomb', which saunters toward the enemy base with a knowing glint in its eye.

Roll out the barrel

Best of all, the different types of unit exhibit recognisably different physical traits. Aircraft in *Red Alert* are essentially just sprites. They may be 'airborne', but they don't really behave like genuine planes. Here, aircraft bank, turn, fly off the map and even perform barrel rolls.

And then there's you. Unlike most real-time stratfests where you direct the carnage from on high like some kind of dislocated god, *Total Annihilation* tackles apathy before it sets in, forcing the player to roll up his sleeves and take part in the struggle first-hand. This is achieved by including a unit called the Commander on





(Left) You'll need to think about what you deploy where. Spider bots are particularly adept at clambering up steep inclines, heavy tanks are not.

Product details

Developer: Cavedog

Publisher: GT Interactive

Website: www.cavedog.com

Release date: August

Cavedog? Where the hell did they spring from?

Cavedog are a new production team. *PC Zone* met Chris Taylor, *Total Annihilation*'s lead designer, on a recent flying visit to London. And, would you Adam-and-Eve it? It turns out that in the past he was partly responsible for *4D Sports Boxing* and *Hardball 2*.

However, *Total Annihilation* is apparently much more his bag, because he just loves "complete destruction, total rockin' explosions" and the like. He's young, he's the spitting image of Griff Rhys Jones (slightly chubbier, but unfortunate all the same) and possesses an agreeably dark sense of humour, replete with a booming laugh. And we like him, so we had a quick chat...

PC Zone: What does *Total Annihilation* have that *Red Alert* and its chums don't?

Chris Taylor: Those games basically play on a flat, tiled map – at the time it was an advancement just to get the whole thing running in real time. That's great, but it's time to advance it to the next level – real 3D terrain and 3D units. The 3D world affects the way the game is played. Suddenly, you've got projectile weapons versus line-of-sight weapons. You've got to take into consideration the surrounding terrain – in most games, your unit will simply fire in a straight line over a given distance, whereas here you may have to move, say, a battleship closer to the shoreline for its shells to clear a hill. You've got planes flying at different altitudes. It all really opens the game up.

And we're going to provide new units. You'll be able to go to our Website and download a new unit every week.

PCZ: But won't you then run out of new unit types pretty quickly and have to resort to stupid custard-pie throwers and things?

CT: Yeah, well, there are plenty of areas we can go into. Psionics, for example – units with mental powers. Experimental insectoid vehicles. Underwater base-building units. More 'super weapons'. And we could do 'nutty' things as well. It's all wide open.

PCZ: You must have played your way through a lot of wars – do you reckon you could commandeer a real-life one?



CT: Sure. Because through playing, you learn that you've got to control the air. You don't start bombing them until you've taken out their fighters. And then you take out the things that are anti-air. Then you soften up the remaining ground targets as much as possible with bombs and long-range artillery fire. And once that's done you move in with your armoured ground forces, sweeping through really quickly. Finally, you go in and mop up whatever's left with your infantry.

PCZ: But wouldn't you feel at all guilty? They'd be real people, after all.

CT: Oh, sure. But in *Annihilation* it's all robots and machinery, so you can dissociate yourself from it a bit. That was a conscious decision.

PCZ: If the planes and tanks had genitals, which would have the biggest dick?

CT: Well, I'll tell ya... in *TA* the Bulldog is a pretty tough tank. Actually though, I would say that the Commander has got the biggest dick on the battlefield. Because that's you.

PCZ: So how do you think this well-endowed Commander affects the gameplay?

CT: There's an interesting level of testosterone there – other games don't have a central character like that. If you have the 'Commander Death' option on (which means that when he dies, you die too), you treat the Commander very differently. Maybe you won't at first, but once you get into a real serious game – when you want to know who the real shitkicker in the office is – you aren't just going to run into battle and shoot stuff willy-nilly. You're going to use him preciously.

But I find that even after all the playing I've done, I still get this little thrill out of going

"Okay, you bastards – you're never going to suspect this," and I take my Commander into battle and start blasting everybody. Then all of a sudden it's "Jesus Christ! I'm outnumbered! Aww, shit!" and I'm spinning round trying to blast everyone, and then seconds later I'm out of the game. How did that happen? Because you thought you were invincible. You thought you were Rambo. Your ego got the better of you and it cost you the game.

PCZ: Do you tend to smash things up when you lose in true John Romero fashion?

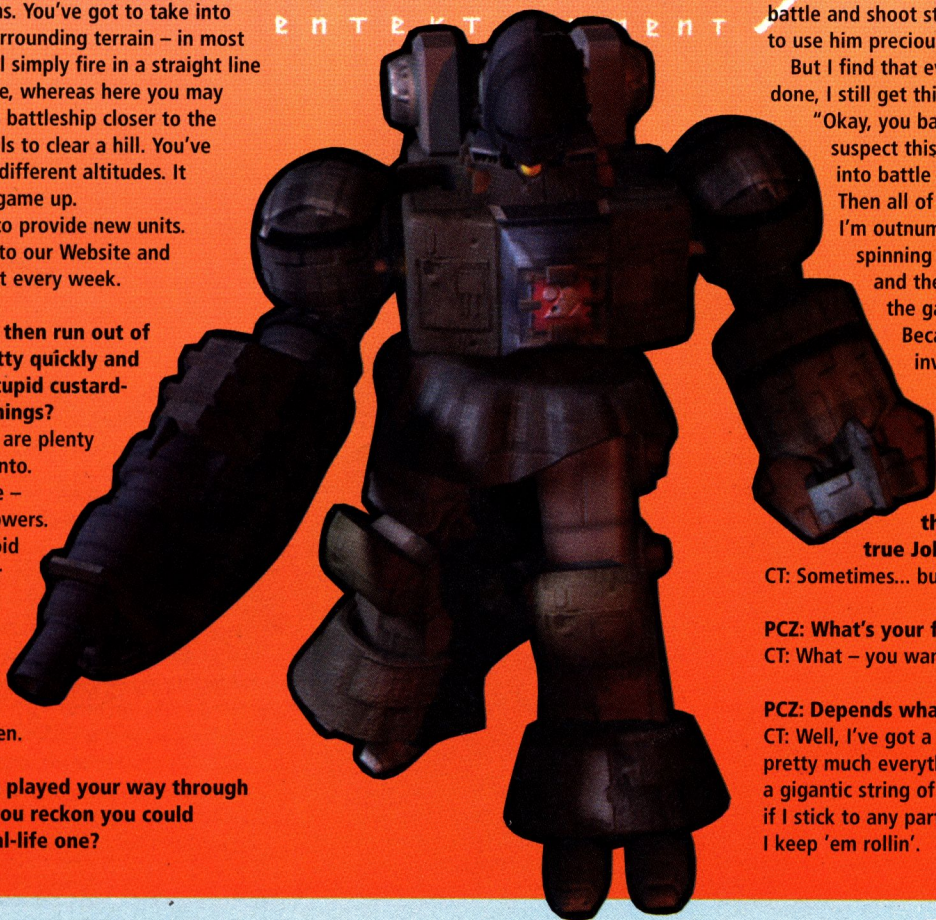
CT: Sometimes... but mainly I do a lot of cussin'.

PCZ: What's your favourite offensive phrase?

CT: What – you wanna print it in your magazine?

PCZ: Depends what it is, we don't mind...

CT: Well, I've got a trucker's mouth so I've said pretty much everything under the sun. Often it's a gigantic string of swearwords. But I don't know if I stick to any particular one. I'm pretty fluent. I keep 'em rollin'.





(Left) Because the units in *Total Annihilation* are modelled in 3D, everything looks a lot more solid. Aircraft can bank, turn and even perform barrel rolls, for example.

"The terrain over which your troops move is fully contoured, opening up a big fresh boxful of tactics."

the battlefield – a beefy mech unit which represents your own good self. The Commander also sports a bloody great disintegrating gun on his arm, making him ultra-powerful but also a natural target. And if it dies, things go downhill very quickly indeed...

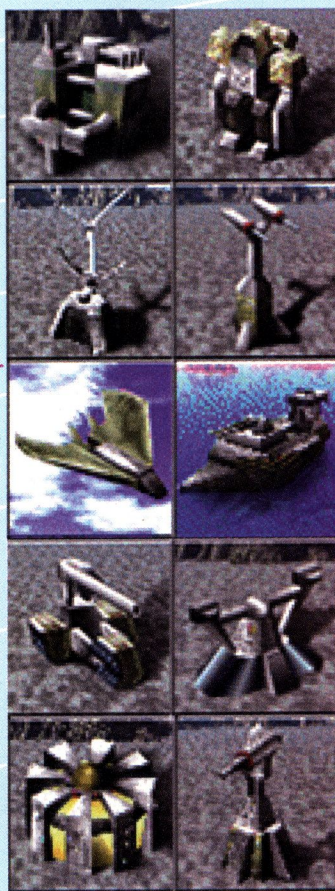
War is heck

If what we've seen and played so far is anything to go by (and let's face it, it is), *Total Annihilation* deserves to be a rip-roaring success. The combination of an intuitive interface, a 'proper' 3D environment and the sheer variety of units at your disposal are all indications of a most agreeable multi-player experience. A lot will depend on just how sharp the single-player mission enemy AI for the game turns out to be.

Whatever happens, this is clearly one to watch. We'll be probing its every crevice with our chunky great round-headed reviewing baton as soon as is humanly possible. **Z**



(Above) Hills provide shelter from line-of-sight weapons, forcing your opponent to attack with projectiles, which means he'll have to move his artillery into range and out of cover, which means that you can try and take him out. Cool.



(Above) There are already 175 units in the game and players will be able to download others from the Net every few weeks after release.

The Triple 'A' factor

Total Annihilation was the subject of so many admiring glances at the recent E3 trade show in Atlanta that the publishers decided to groom it as a Triple 'A' product. Fine. But what on earth does that mean to us lesser mortals? Here, briefly, is an excerpt from the forthcoming *Oxford Dictionary Of Videogame Industry Arsetalk*, which promises to make sense of marketing-speak once and for all... Hallelujah.

TRIPLE 'A' PRODUCT

One of the few titles we're releasing this year that's actually any good.

A NEW SLANT ON A POPULAR GENRE

It's a *Quake* clone.

INNOVATIVE GAME DESIGN

We haven't got a clue what's going on in this one. Oh, for the days of *Paperboy*. At least you knew where you were then.

BETA VERSION

It's supposed to be out next week, but the damn thing barely works. Sweet Jesus, please let it hold together.

PROJECTED RELEASE DATE

We will repeatedly smack the entire programming team in the face with a fencepost if they don't finish the sodding thing in time for Christmas.

PUMPIN' TECHNO SOUNDTRACK

A certain Chemical Brothers wannabe at the development house cooked up the music in his bedroom. And it's shite.

MUCH-IMPROVED SEQUEL

The previous game sold well, but it was rubbish. We're never going to pull that trick off twice, so here's the game as it should have been all along.

STATE-OF-THE-ART

The minimum spec is a 266MHz Pentium II.

EYE-CATCHING CAMPAIGN

We're courting controversy by either:

A) Placing a huge colour photo of a car crash victim's bloody, mashed-in face, with the caption "Look at this, ha ha ha," on every available billboard in the country.

B) Placing a huge black and white photo of a young lady's private parts, with the caption "Look at this, ha ha ha," on every available billboard in the country. Especially those that happen to be opposite schools.

EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING

Saitek X36



The Saitek X36 is the ultimate in flight simulation control.

Whether you're flying a Boeing 747 or an F22, the X36's massive array of features gives you the edge in any situation.

The 'point & click' Windows Interface makes programming easy, bringing over 250 game functions to your fingertips.

Developed by an award winning team, the sculptured design and high grip finish make the X36 a pleasure to use - even on long haul flights.

The X36 - so good, it's even better than the real thing.

Features include:

- Stick - 2x 8-way Hat Switches, 3x Fire Buttons, Trigger, Missile Launcher with Safety Cover, Function Modifier 'Pinkie' Switch with LED.
- Throttle - Detents, Rudder Control, 2x Rotary Controls, 4-way Hat Switch, 2x 3-Way Switches, Mouse Emulator, 2x Fire Buttons, 3x Mode Status LEDs.
- Over 250 Programmable Commands
- Easy to use Windows Programming Interface.

» Comes Pre-Programmed for Microsoft® Flight Simulator.

X36 Throttle & Stick System available for under £100. Separates from just £49.99.

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For your FREE brochure call Saitek on 01454 855050, or visit our web site www.saitek.com

TEST DRIVE 4

Fast cars and loose women? Well one out of two ain't bad, reckons John Houlihan, as he heads off for far-flung northern climes.

7

T'S GRIM OOP NORTH," AS THEY SAY, BUT it's a surprisingly warm and sunny day that greets me as I descend on the riverside offices of the Pitbull Syndicate, fetchingly located on the banks of the Wear just outside Sunderland. And the reason I've been summoned to these northern hinterlands? Well, it's to catch an early work-in-progress peek at *Test Drive 4*, the latest incarnation of the long-running series which has appeared on almost every gaming platform since the early proto-dawn of computing.

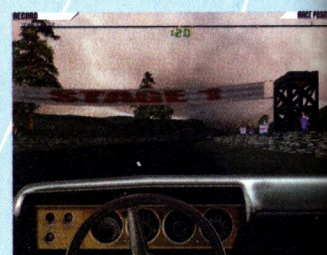
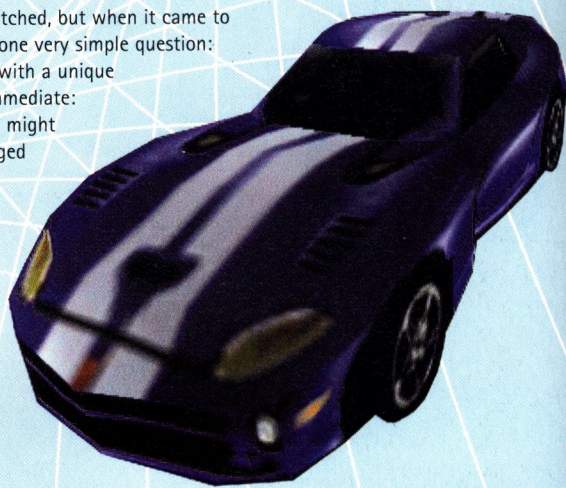
Richard Beston, Pitbull's head honcho, ushers us swiftly into an inner sanctum which is chock full of glossy magazines, replica models and all the other motoring paraphernalia you would normally associate with high octane, testosterone-guzzling sports cars, to explain how it all began. Pitbull officially sprang into existence in the early months of this year, with a remit to produce high-quality driving games and a team whose past credits include *Destruction Derby 1* and *2* and *Monster Trucks*.

Accolade, who signed them up, originally had an internal team working on the title, but when the Pitbull crew dropped into their California offices last year, according to Richard,

"They simply wouldn't let us leave the building until we'd put our cross on the dotted line."

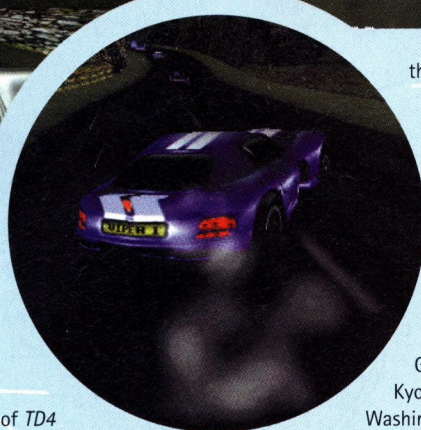
A deal was struck and a plot hatched, but when it came to spec'ing out *TD4* they only asked one very simple question: "What's the best way to come up with a unique driving game?" The answer was immediate: use real cars, but, as James Brown might say, make them funky. What emerged from this brainstorming session was an idea for a road-racing sim that would pit "the beauty of the present against the beast of the past" – fast, modern sports cars against their classic US counterparts, in a series of mad, bad and dangerous-to-know races, across the four corners of the globe.

Obviously, a major part of the appeal of *TD4* is going to be a chance to get behind the wheel of some throbbing motoring technology that you wouldn't normally get your sweaty paws on in a million years, and then wipe it out at over a ton and never mind the paintwork, Vicar. To this end, you'll be relieved to discover that *TD4* will contain a full complement of the finest European and US sporting motors known to humanity: the Shelby Series 1, Dodge Viper, GTS-R, Acura NSX-T, '97 Corvette and '97 Camaro SS head up the modern contenders, while the Shelby Cobra, '67 Corvette, '68 Dodge Challenger and '68 Plymouth 426 make up the US 'muscle'



The graphics in *Test Drive 4* are a far cry from the ugly, four-colour CGA graphics that were the hallmark of the first game in the series. This year's model sports gorgeous visuals brought to you courtesy of the new wave of graphic accelerator cards, most notably of course the 3Dfx.

There are multiple viewpoints in the game, including (below) the in-car view and (right) the nowhere near the car at all view.



challenge of the past. In a less serious vein, the addition of comedy ghost cars like the Reliant Robin, Mini and even a hovercraft should make for ample hilarity across the eight-player network option, which is included for optimum multi-player carnage.

According to Richard, one of the main aims of *TD4* is to "promote an attention to detail, which is sadly missing in most racing games". So Pitbull have been taking the real motors for a spin, busily mapping dashboards, sampling engine sounds and generally adding all those extra little touches which they hope will add to the authenticity of the full-on driving experience. The car's handling is extremely realistic and car physics and dynamics are all accurately reproduced, so if you've ever wondered what it's like to fishtail a Dodge Viper at 160mph, *TD4* will show you exactly what you've been missing. Oncoming and crossroad traffic will also feature heavily, as will evading the local fuzz. There was even some talk of including pedestrians who might 'accidentally' bounce off your bonnet, but with all the recent fuss over *Carmageddon*, this is a feature that is unlikely to make it into the final game.

Once you're out on the open road, there'll be six different courses to test your driving mettle and, in an interesting departure, they're all based on actual locations and faithfully reproduced from photos and maps for enhanced realism. The Lake District circuit, which is the only one up and running at



The *Test Drive 4* development team adopt their 'what we don't know about driving games is probably not worth knowing' pose.

the moment, is based on the area around Keswick and is so lifelike that if you pull a handbrake turn in the village, you'll end up in the car park of Richard's local boozer. Other tracks scheduled include the bumps and jumps of San Francisco, a winding Italian Alps circuit, mayhem on a German autobahn, the thrill of Kyoto in Japan, the spills of Washington DC and a hidden bonus underground course which will only be

revealed in the fullness of time. All promise to be absorbingly large, at roughly ten scale miles apiece, while features like reverse racing, day/night sections, split time trials and a covert drag racing thrash should provide plenty of challenge.

Even at this early stage, *TD4*'s graphics are looking disturbingly sleek, polished and Turtle Waxed to gleaming

"If Test Drive 4 lives up to its billing, we can banish road rage from the streets and get it back on our screens."

perfection. All the motors are lovingly depicted with Softimage and weigh in at a meaty 256 texture-mapped polygons – double the detail of most ordinary racing sims. The finished article will be replete with upto ten different views, including an overhead OJ-style chase camera and a first-person 'behind the wheel' perspective, which is already buttock-clenchingly fast, genuinely scary and clocks in at a chunky 44 frames per second, flat out. As you'd expect, *TD4* will also be taking full advantage of 3D accelerator technology, so you're best advised to start tuning up your graphics cards right now.

Test Drive 4 should be hitting the streets around about early November and after that Pitbull will be concentrating on two more racing games and a third, mysterious non-driving title, which had the Pitbullers exchanging knowing looks and raising an enigmatic collective eyebrow. Despite fearsome entreaties, offers of hefty bribes and my best arm-twisting techniques, no one could be persuaded to reveal anything further.

But one thing's for sure – if *Test Drive 4* lives up to its billing, we can banish road rage from the streets and get it back on our screens, where it rightfully belongs. **Z**

Product details

Developer: Pitbull/Accolade

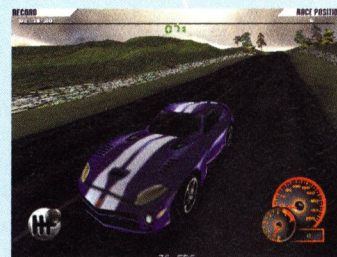
Publisher: Electronic Arts

Website: www.ea.com

Release date: Early November

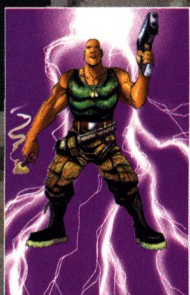


Unusually for a driving game, *Test Drive 4* features lots and lots of cars. And look, here's one we made earlier folks.



This is the sort of viewpoint you won't be using when you're driving round the place. Unless you don't want to see where you're going.

DAIKATANA



(Above) Original character artwork.

AS CHRISTMAS APPROACHES, THE 3D SHOOT 'EM UP STEEPLECHASE ROLLS EVER ONWARD, AND AMONG THE FRONT RUNNERS IS **DAIKATANA**. **DAVID MCCANDLESS** SHOT OVER TO DALLAS TO MEET THE ION STORM SQUAD, EXAMINE THEIR OFFICE, AND PARTY HARD THROUGH THE NIGHT (ALL IN THE NAME OF THOROUGH JOURNALISM, YOU UNDERSTAND).



DALLAS IS A STRANGE PLACE. NOT strange in the way that Milton Keynes or Stevenage are strange, but strange in a way that only a rich, southern American city can be strange. It's weird. The people are weird – they say "y'all". "How y'all doing?" they say to me when there is only one of me standing there. They ask you how you are when you walk into a shop. "I'm suffering from cognitive dissonance and a bad case of bellinitis," you say. "Okay, well y'all have a good day then," is their response.

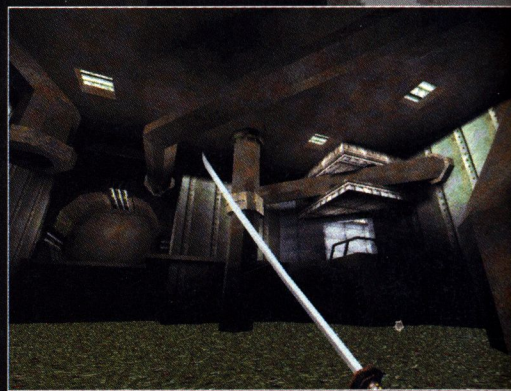
The weekend we've chosen to visit Ion Storm there's a Gun & Knife Show on at the local exposition centre ("Something For All The Family" says the advert). Then again you can always go to the sixth-floor museum and look out of the window where Lee Harvey Oswald 'shot' President Kennedy. Or you can gawp at the massive skyscrapers which dominate the skyline and compare them to your memory of the opening sequence to soap opera Dallas.

(Right) The inclusion of hand-to-hand weapons should make for some interesting melee combat situations, especially in deathmatch mode.

In this sea of strangeness, the 17-strong Daikatana team is a welcome relief. They're normal. They love games, stay up weird hours, eat peanut butter snacks, talk in dudespeak, wear crumpled T-shirts, and play deathmatch all night. It's just like being at home.

Ion Storm's office is based in the Texas Commerce Tower, the second biggest skyscraper on the Dallas skyline. It's notable for having a huge great hole in it (on purpose) and for being really big and shiny. Much like, you could amusingly conclude, a penis. Come the end of the year the company are going to move into the penthouse, a huge glassy courtyard right slap bang at the top of the tower. Loads of 'cool shit' is being designed to slot into the acres of room upstairs – a bar, pool tables, motion-capture stage, recording studio, deathmatch stations. In the meantime, however, Ion Storm are inhabiting a temporary space on the 30th floor, where all of their 60 staffers sit in little cubicles, hammering away lovingly at their various tasks.

It's true, by the way. Every desk has two machines, two Pentium 200s with 64Mb of RAM (minimum) with 21-inch monitors. Every section has its own snackbox (contents: popcorn, Opal Fruits, Hershey bars, and other healthy stuff). There are two fridges, containing an endless supply of every soft drink imaginable. There's a futsal table. A table tennis, sorry, 'ping pong' table. Lots of posters, weird pictures, insulting banners, and



DIARY

The continuing day-to-day story of the development of *Daikatana*...

Carrying on from where he left off last month, ace reporter and man-on-the-spot **David 'UberGibKing' McCandless**

brings us this lowdown direct from Atlanta and Ion Storm's HQ Dallas, Texas, on the thoughts and progress of *Daikatana*...

19 June 1997

E³. *Daikatana* and the talented Ion Storm team have commandeered a large section of the mighty Eidos stand at the show. All the troopers are present and **John Romero** is

showing off a software-only version of *Daikatana* (20% finished) with three or four levels. Sadly, every software company and their barber are showing off their games in glorious 3Dfx mode, making *Daikatana*'s 320x200 visuals look relatively unimpressive. Those in the know judge games on design and concept. Alas, the majority just go for pretty front ends.

23 June

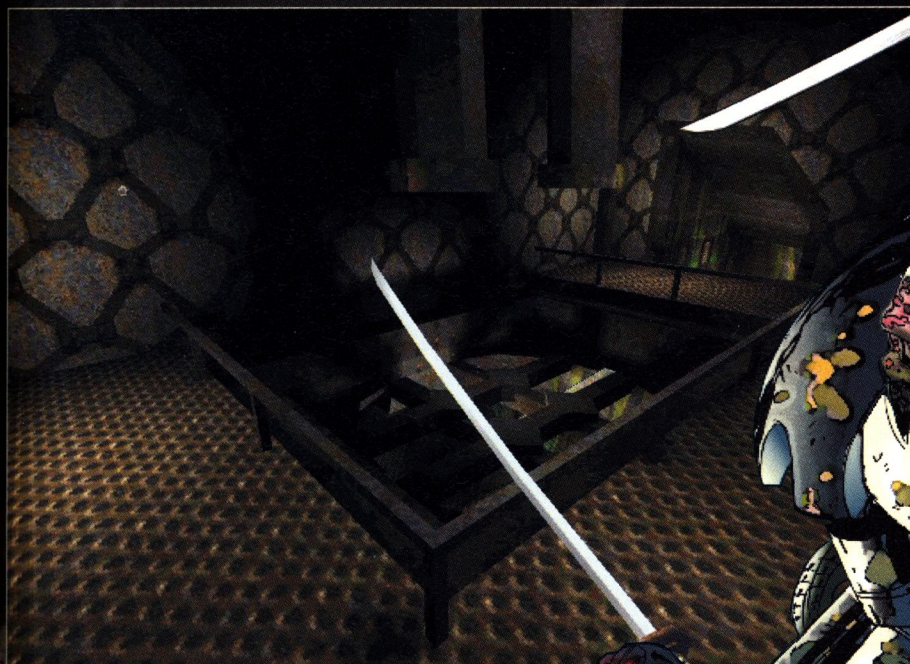
Some of the *Daikatana* team are a little upset by the mixed reactions of the games community to their E³ demo. Luckily most of them still feel inspired. "We know it's going to be great," says **Romero**.

26 June

Nelno – the artificial intelligence guru – implemented some creepy AI yesterday for the

A DIARY

PART 2



Statement Of Intent

E³ went well for Ion Storm, but some people were disappointed at the reaction to the demo version of *Daikatana* when compared to the likes of GL *Quake 2* and *Unreal*. So we gave AI programmer Jonathon Wright an opportunity to put the record straight...



"I'd like to confirm that there will definitely be a GL version. However, we're concentrating on making an 8-bit unaccelerated version that normal people can play on normal computers without upgrading their hardware. E³ is all glitz, so perhaps we should have shown a GL version instead, but we did show an 8-bit version that looks good and doesn't look like *Quake*."

"As regards the monster AI, anyone who ran with the skeletons on Dr Sleep's level, E2M1, should have noticed it was far better than any monster AI in any 3D first-person game released to date. The AI is there for over a dozen of our 64 monsters, but doing the large number of animation sequences required takes time."

"Many of our 29 or so weapons are already coded, but they also lack animations. The weapons that we showed at E³ were designed using temporary art."

"We worked very hard to get ready for E³, and we showed what we felt looked best. I think we've done a hell of a lot in the three months we've been working flat out, but that's just my two cents worth."

(Above) The game will feature around 40 different monsters, each with their own attacks, and quirks and AI routines.

spider in one of the Greek levels designed by **John Anderson**. The 'hard' Webmaster Noel is a little perturbed by the on-screen arachnid and runs around the office screaming. The mother spider and its little babies follow you around the level, scuttling, and will swim through water and jump over rocks. Yeuch.

28 June

Arch *Quake* ninjass **Corneliah** visits the office to 'take' various

deathmatch glitterati. And take she does, hammering **Romero**, **Squirrel**, and the current office champ, **Noel Stevens**. Her plan is to visit iD software and go to a Net party at the weekend. At the weekend Corneliah returns to LA with a necklace made from the ears of most of the major *Quake* players in Dallas.

29 June

More *Daikatana* deathmatching today between **Kee**, **Nelno**, **Matt**, and Sverre. ▶

THINGS TO DO IN DAIKATANA WHEN YOU'RE NOT DEAD NO 5 (IN A SERIES OF 20)

ROCKET JUMPING

As any good *Quake* player knows, rocket jumping is an essential skill to master in deathmatch. But in *Daikatana*, you'd better not get lazy. Some monsters and both SuperFly and Mikiko will be able to rocket jump. "Right now, they're too accurate," says Jonathon 'AI programmer' Wright. "They can also jump onto ledges, work out the shortest route to weapons, and be set up to never miss." You have been warned.

not much light. As I wander around the nearly empty office, I stumble

across a computer, a dead dedicated *Quake* server still on after the night's excesses. On the screen is a log of a mid-game conversation between two *Daikatana* deathmatchers:

Player 1: Go, bitch.

Player 2: Yes, go you losing bitch.

Player 1: Whatever.

Player 2: Go.

Player 1: Maybe you'll beat me... for the second time ever. Maybe.

Player 2: It's only da beginning.

Player 1: Have some woop ass.

Player 2: Dumbshit.

Player 1: Smackage!

Player 2: You want some more?

Player 1: Suck on it!

Player 2: ...and stay down.

Player 1: Splat!

These are deeply disturbed people. But then it's only deeply disturbed people who can create the ninja-scopio games that make us sag so with delight. **Z**

(Below) The GL version of *Daikatana* will look fantastic, and here's the good news – so will the software version.



The Music Man

"The Infernal Master Of Noise" is Will Loconto's job title. He is a one-man beatbox, responsible for all the music, all the sound effects, and all the ambient atmosphere of *Daikatana*.

So what's the *Daikatana* music going to be like?

Will Loconto: Well, not like *Quake's*, that for sure. We're not going for all the ambient stuff. We're going back to the *Doom*-style, tune per level approach. Each episode has its own style of music.

PCZ: Like what?

WL: Well, the first episode, set in the 22nd century, is all hi-tech futuristic techno music. Hard beats, synths and weird analogue sounds. The Greek era has more sedate, filmic music – trumpets, French horns, timpani, male voice choirs. Then you've got the Medieval period with acoustic guitars and scary strings. Finally, the fourth episode, way in the future, has hard death-rock guitars, pounding bass, huge drums – it's very Pink Floyd-y.

PCZ: Cool. So what makes you so qualified to do *Daikatana's* music?

WL: I've been doing music for 15 years and started a band in 1990 called T42. We were signed to Columbia. I wrote the songs, sang, played keyboards and guitars. (*Will plays some. It's sort of Depeche Mode synth pop stuff. Very hummable.*) We did a Heaven 17 cover which was very successful. Then I joined a band called Information Society on a world tour for four years. Playing keyboards, drumpads, and singing backup.

PCZ: How did you get the job?

WL: I heard John was starting a company, so I sent him a tape. He came to my house. All the indications were that I was going to get the job. Then nothing happened. So I mailed him like a month later and he replied saying: "Oh by the way, you're hired." I arrived in the middle of January and slowly started accumulating all this stuff.

PCZ: And you do the sound effects too?

WL: Yeah. We've got 200 sound effects

CDs but you can never have enough. They're good for ambient sounds like wind, water, but they're expensive and every other game developer has them. So we like to create our sounds ourselves as much as possible by combining all sorts of weird audio stuff.

PCZ: How many sound effects do you have to come up with?

WL: Even if I did just seven sounds a monster, that would be about 500.

Then 35 weapons. I'd say probably, with ambient sounds – winds, elevators, explosions – 1,000 to 1,500 sounds. Plus 33 songs.

Plus all the music and effects for the other Ion Storm games.

PCZ: Any particularly cool effects you're working on?

WL: Pistol. We're deathmatching with it. Sometimes it will ricochet. If I fire at you way across the level, I might be far enough away that you don't hear the gunshot. But you'll hear the ping around you.

PCZ: How do you get the sound effects working in the current version?

WL: If someone's making a weapon, I look at it. The crossbow, for example, is straightforward. There are zillions of sounds for bows and arrows. I digitally transfer them from the CD, combine them with others, play around with effects, and then stick it on the network and somebody will pop it into the game. Sound effects are more difficult than I thought they would be. You need to look at it in the game to know if it sucks. Sometimes it's just trial and error.

PCZ: What would you say to people wanting to get into game music?

WL: I get funny demos from people. Most are useless because every song sounds the same. The demo I sent in, every song on it was different. You have to show you're versatile and can do variety of styles.

PCZ: Is this your best job ever?

WL: This is a dream job. I love games. I love sound effects. The other games are going to let me do a variety of styles. I'd never done anything like this before. Everyone thought I was crazy for quitting a signed band, but I just wanted to play games.



THINGS TO DO IN DAIKATANA WHEN YOU'RE NOT DEAD NO 4 (IN A SERIES OF 20)

DESIGN YOUR OWN STUFF

Until now most of *Quake's* open architecture, allowing you to design your own monsters, weapons, doors and all that stuff, has been rooted in *Quake C* – a scary interpreted language accessible only for those with spots and/or translucent skin. Now, for the first time, *Daikatana* will be using DLL – Dynamic Link Libraries – as used in Windows. The advantage? More flexibility. Ten times faster to process. And a lot tidier.

Weapons included the Discus Of Daedalus, the Crossbow, a couple of secret weapons, and the ever popular Dog Launcher. Even at this early stage it, apparently, 'rocks'.

30 June

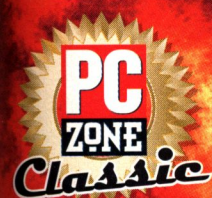
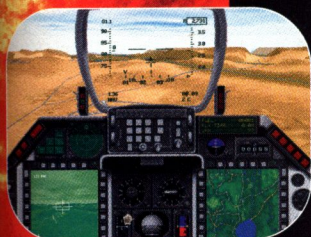
After some interesting visual bugs, the GL version of *Daikatana* is up and running. It looks most



impressive. The 24-bit textures are particularly gorgeous. The snow and fog effects look smoother and more realistic.

5 July

Sverre Kvernmo, level designer, has almost finished his prison level: "Alcatraz is just about done and features a lot of stuff actually on the island: a lighthouse, a water tower, cliff paths, and of course the last place you wanna find yourself in – the prison shower room!" **Z**



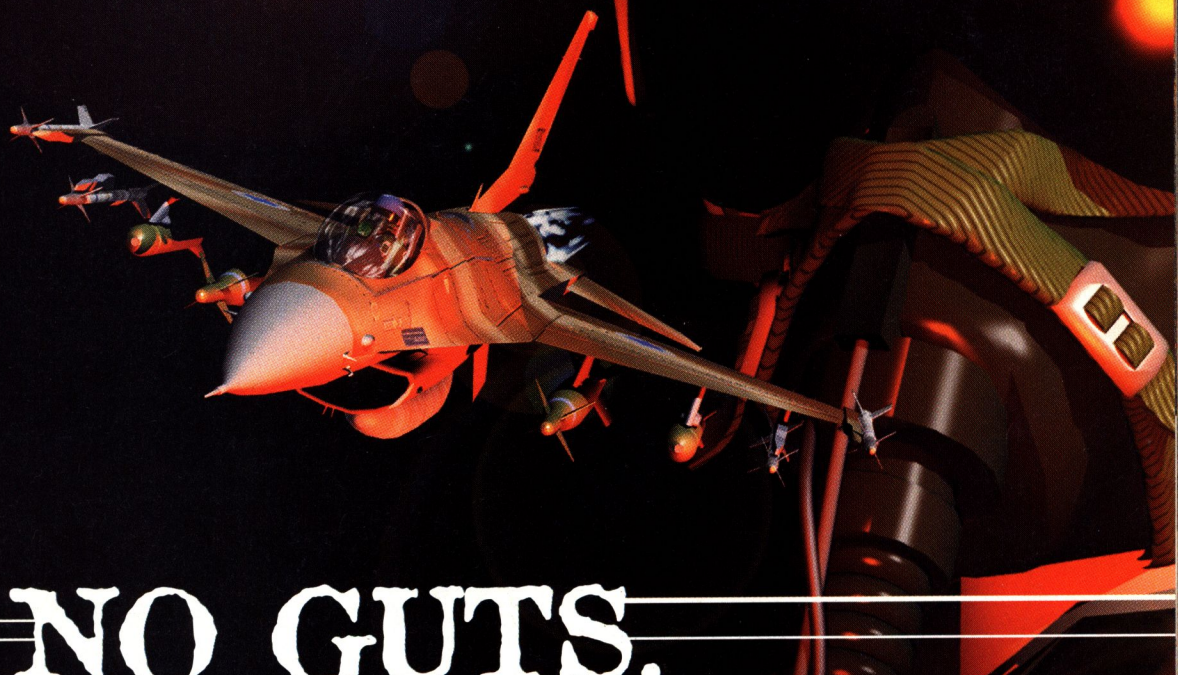
"Accurate modelling, coupled with excellent gameplay. The best of both worlds."

91%



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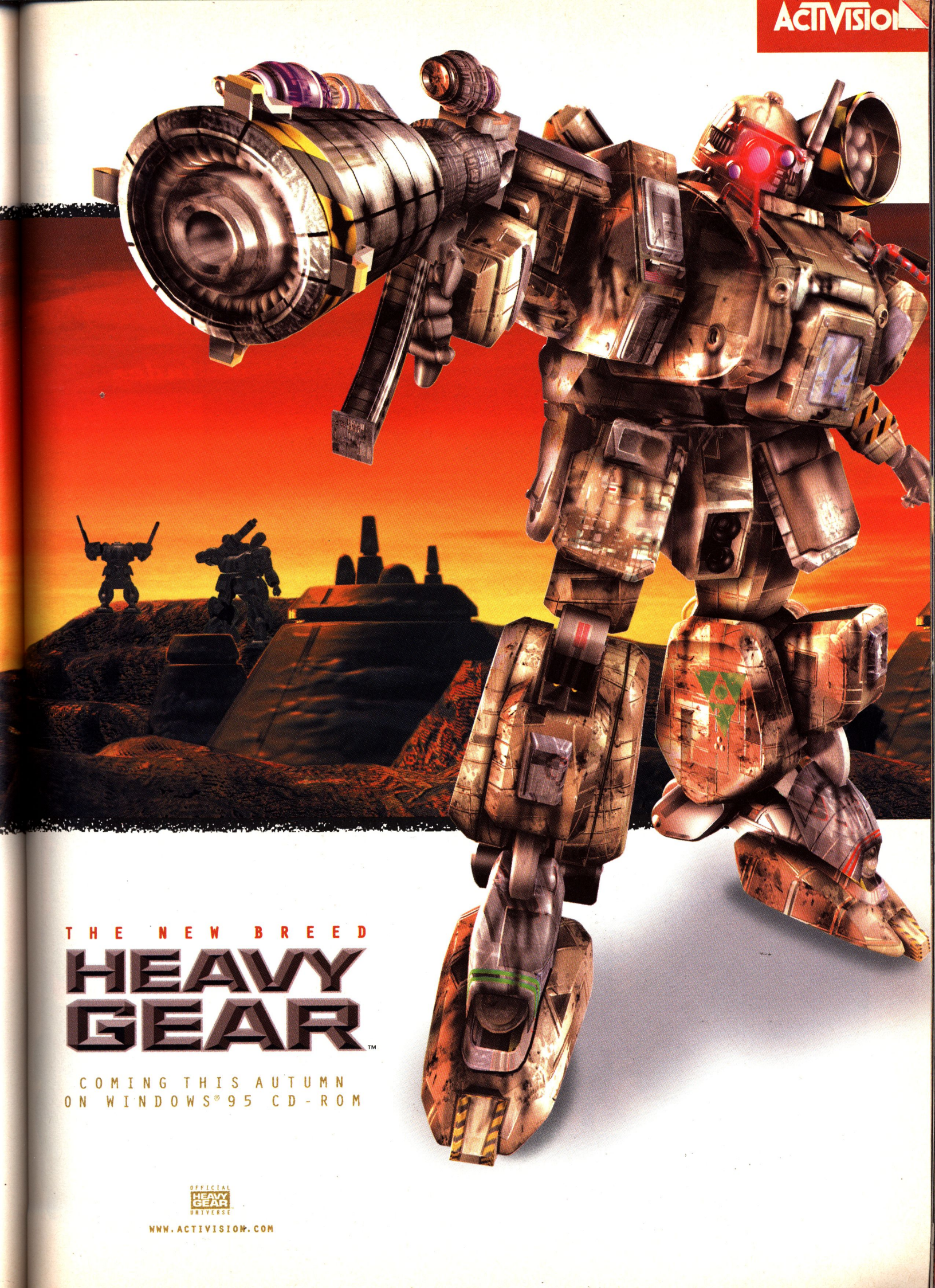
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Review ZONE



Quake is dead, long live Hexen II. That's the feeling of Macca (the Uberfragmeister himself) and everyone else in the office who has played *Hexen II*. Not only does it look utterly gorgeous, but as a single-player game, it's the best example of the genre we've ever played. If you liked *Quake*, you'll love *Hexen II*.

In Perspective

This is designed to be a purely visual guide as to how games of a similar style compare to one another. The bars do not relate to previous review scores... they are simply an indication of how the reviewer feels about the products on a sliding scale.

Game 1



Game 2



Cool games

We see literally hundreds of games over the months but there are a few that we hang on to and continue to play at lunchtime/when we're supposed to be doing far more important stuff...

Hexen II

Carmageddon (with gore patch)

Pete Sampras Tennis 97

LBA 2: Twinsen's Odyssey

Quake

Crap games

There are some games that you can leave in the middle of the room with a big sign next to them saying "please steal me" and yet you still can't get rid of the bloody things...

Space Station Simulator

Ten Pin Alley

Hardcore 4x4

Formula Karts

The Feeble Files

Scoring system

90+	CLASSIC
80-89	RECOMMENDED
70-79	GOOD
50-69	AVERAGE
40-49	BELOW AVERAGE
21-39	POOR
20 and below	PANTS

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Thanks this issue to

- Everybody @ Raven
- John Romero and all @ Ion Storm
- Howard Glover @ Sierra
- Microsoft
- Sam @ SCI
- Alison Grant @ Interplay
- Ben Et Janine @ Activision



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Awards



90+ CLASSIC

The highest accolade a game can attain. It's innovative, extremely playable and has masses of long-term appeal. If you're going to buy a game this month, it should be this.



80-89 RECOMMENDED

An excellent game that simply lacks that certain something to make it a gaming classic. Well worth checking out, especially if you're a big fan of the genre.



20 and below PANTS

Absolutely bloody awful. Crap with a capital C. Naff with a capital N. Do not buy this game, it will ruin your life and all those who come into contact with you. Got it? Have we made ourselves clear?

Looking back

Say hello, wave goodbye

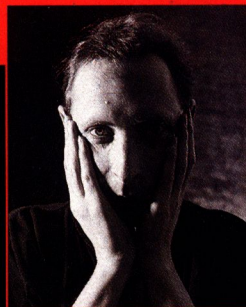
7 T'S BEEN A traumatic month for Steve Hill, a new (and very welcome) addition to the *Zone* freelance crew. It's all my fault really. I gave him a new CD-ROM drive to play

an absolutely incredible feat I'm sure you'll agree (if a tiny tad unrealistic).

Paul Presley has been playing *Outlaws* which he claims has fantastic atmosphere and excellent music (he confesses to having played the soundtrack on his

Macca who has been using the Mame emulator to play old classics like *Ghosts 'N' Goblins* and *Gauntlet*. Macca's also playing *Hexen II* to death, despite the fact that he finished his review ages ago.

Patrick McCarthy has temporarily put his PC to one



with Chris Anderson

graphically stunning it's been turning heads in the office all week, although he admits he's waiting patiently for an opportunity to play *LBA 2*.

John Davison has been playing *Dungeon Keeper* to death. He says the level design is awesome, and the game constantly surprises you with new things the more you play it. He's also well into *Hexen II*, which in his opinion is one of the most graphically impressive games he has ever seen. This is the sort of reaction *Hexen II* has been getting from everyone in the office who's seen it, and it's not just down to the fact that it's running under 3Dfx either – the backgrounds and graphical detail of the game have been soliciting oohs and aahs from all and sundry for the last month.

Finally, *PC Zone* bid a sad farewell to Mr Cursor. He's been with us since the beginning of the magazine and we know he has many, many loyal fans among our readers. We wish him luck – things just ain't gonna be the same around here without him. **Z**



with and it, er, blew up his PC. This unfortunately put an end to the countless hours he'd spent playing *Monkey Island 1*. "It's good," he enthused wildly, "and it's how games should be made." He also claims to have taken Chester City to a league and cup double in *Sensible World Of Soccer* before his PC spontaneously combusted,

stereo over and over), although he's still managed to squeeze in some time for lengthy multi-player *Quake* sessions.

Charlie Brooker has been spending most of his time messing about with console emulators for the PC, which he says are really good (particularly the PC Engine one, which is apparently just like the original thing), as has

side to take a look at *ISS64* on Nintendo's new console. He reckons it's superbly playable and intuitive, and that it also highlights just how inadequate PC footie games really are. This is a problem we hope Gremlin will put right soon with *Actua Soccer 2*.

Jeremy's also hooked on *Hexen II*, a game that's so



ATI 3D
Native Version
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3DBLASTER
Native Version
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3Dfx
Native Version
Available



DIAMOND STEALTH
Native Version
Available



MATROX MYSTIQUE
Native Version
Available



POWERVR
Native Version
Available



The software is designed to take advantage of **D3D**



The software is designed to take advantage of **MMX**



This software will only run under **WINDOWS 95**



The software may run slowly, especially in hi-res mode



The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTINPUT**



The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTPLAY**



The software supports **INTERNET PLAY**

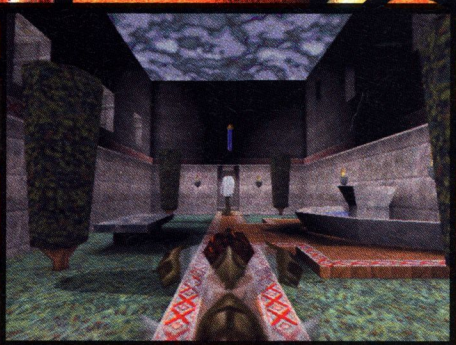


The software will run acceptably on a **486DX2/66**

THE BENCHMARK PC

At *PC Zone* all games are played and tested on a DAN Technology Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM, a 2Mb graphics card and a quad-speed CD-ROM drive.





Hexen II

PC
ZONE
Classic

The first of this winter's *Quake*-engined games has hit the shelves. **David McCandless** loads up his Spooge-Cannon™. Target: *Hexen II*. Oh lordy, run for cover.

D

H, BUT IT'S GOING TO BE A MERRY, MERRY Christmas. Not just one, but four big, juicy *Quake*-powered games will be shipped in Santa's most adequate sack. There'll be *Quake II* (mmmm),

Daikatana (yummy), *Half Life* (delicieuse) and *Hexen II* – Ravensoft and id's version of *Quake* in tights. And a bodkin. With some shiny plate mail. And a nice helmet with a feather in it.

For a good while now, Raven have been busy offloading their dungeons and dragons fantasies on the public. First was *Black Crypt*, a hideously antiquated *Dungeon Master* clone released a zillion years ago. Then *ShadowCaster* appeared on the scene, using the *Wolfenstein* engine, no less. Then we had *Heretic*, which used the *Doom* engine, but added – wow – looking up and down (hey, it was impressive then). Then there was *Hexen*, their pièce de resistance, which completely rewrote the rules on how much you are supposed to squeeze into a 3D shoot 'em up. It had hub-based levels, scripting (with doors that 'peeled' away and windows you

(Main pic) A rude stained-glass window depicting activities on the docks in the Middle Ages, or *Hexen*'s groovy artwork. You decide. (Below left) Hey look – a cool armless lightning-firing Medusa. It either looks like a snake or a penis. Your choice. (Below) Lots of interactive floors await your fumbling footsteps. We like.





You like pyramids – you got pyramids. You like obelisks – there they are. Yellow fingernails – they're yours.

◀ could smash), environmental effects such as earthquakes, an inventory, some rather cool levels, eight-player deathmatch, not to

mention all manner of terrific visual effects. My, how we spooged. If you were to go back and play Hexen now though, you might feel just a little let down. The gameplay naturally remains intact, preserved for

"Hexen II has been gloriously rammed up to date with incredible levels and amazing effects."

all eternity, but the technology sucks – boxy levels, sprites and a wash of drab, dull colours. Hexen II, you will no doubt be relieved to hear, is much the same game, only it's been gloriously rammed up to date with incredible levels, a host of fully polygonal characters, amazing effects, plus sheets, quilts and unfurling countrysides of glorious colour.



Hexen II still sports Quake's rather natty underwater distortion effort – transparent both in GL and software.

It's somewhere in that dark territory between a shoot 'em up and a role-playing game – that place which smells of sour milk and unwashed jeans. You can choose one of four character classes – Assassin, Necromancer, Crusader or Paladin – and your choice changes the game. Potions and power-ups are relocated. Puzzles adapt to suit the mould of the player. Monsters rearrange themselves.

The Necro, for example, controls the element of ice, so most of his weapons, power-ups and bombs revolve around sub-zero paraphernalia. He will encounter more gargoyles and flying nasties which are more suitable for his projectile weapons.

Walnuts, anybody?

The Paladin, as you would expect, is a thug with a brain the size and colour of one of those blackened walnuts you always get in a wire 'sock' of Christmas nuts. He values close combat and hands-on scrapping, so he's got shuriken, swords, axes and the machine gun-like Dragon Staff in his armoury. He doesn't need magic – magic is for poofs. So the floating mana balls needed by the other characters are replaced by flechettes (bombs to you and me) and armour upgrades. And a few extra scorpions and spiders will scuttle out of the dark to engage him.

As in the original, Hexen II's levels are arranged into hubs – a central map surrounded, spoke-like, by other levels. Typically, you travel to and fro between alternate areas, solving puzzles and finding objects which open doors in other parts of the hub. This broadened scope gives the game a more adventurey feel compared to Quake's relentless run-kill-exit linearity.

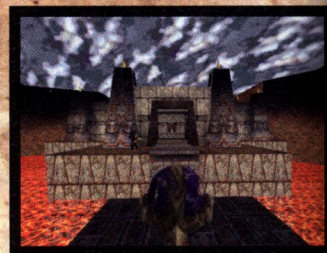
To further increase the yellow-fingernailed appeal to

the unshaven millions who wasted weekends on the joys of tunnels and trolls, each character has an inventory, experience, hit points and an armour class. Grabbing breastplates and helms adds to your AC (oh god! I know the correct abbreviations). Killing monsties and stepping on spiders will boost your XP, which in turn increases your HPs. The inventory is used to amass offensive and defensive power-ups and to stash important game items and keys. A single item can be 'readied' in advance, only a keypress away in the Use slot.

In the tradition of fantasy-type games, your starting point is a castle – a lichen-stained medieval castle, with fascinating nooks and crannies rubbing shoulders with cavernous dining halls and acres of prisons, oubliettes and sewers drenched in ankle-high waste. Light streams in through huge stained-glass windows stream. Thick pools of shadow seethe blackly in the corners.

Outside, field and rock areas give way to strangely disconnected labs and libraries, complete with bookcases, desks and coffins. Small villages and outposts usher you into dark, winding tunnels, mountain springs and abandoned tombs. There's an entire cathedral replete with architraves, choir balcony, vestry and confessional booths. And you can smash the windows too. Admit it – haven't you always wanted to do that?

Next stop after eight levels of medievaly is the Meso-american hub (that means Aztec, in case you're not sure). You find the usual trappings of our South American friends, bursting with colour – huge wall-paintings of Quetzacoatl, sacrificial temples, sandstone mazes, strange,



(From the top) A selection of postcards from my Adventures In Hexen II: One of the big boss riders astride a Shetland; some Aztec temple action; a spot of reading in the Cathedral; more Medusa action; and another rendezvous with that Shetland geezer. No, I do not want a pony ride. Not now, not ever.



Note the use of colour here to brighten up an otherwise gloomy *Quake*-like scene. New palettes mean new thrills.

dead-end passages and tight, scary crawl spaces. Black, mystical obelisks rear up from the ground, while huge collapsing 'things' (for want of a better word) come a-tumbling down around you. There's a lot of emphasis on arachnids here, plus coachloads of mummies – and these aren't your clichéd bandaged boys either, but true mummies, dressed in their funeral finery and head masks, with their limbs dropping off. Cool.

After eight levels of this Peruvian playground, off you go to Egypt. Similar in visual style to the Meso section, it follows the architectural highlights of Tomb Raider and the Dissolution Of Eternity mission pack for Quake. To wit – huge sphinx, pyramids, endless labyrinths, sarcophagi, boulders and broken tombs.

After farting around in this area for a good few hours, you find yourself transported to a Roman area. There's a subtle change in style, with some beautiful wall murals, Latin wall signs, sunken gardens, fountains, colonnades and vast open spaces, ripe for some serious hand-to-hand violence. Oh dear – that thousand year old vase got smashed. Oops – broke that statue, too.

Home again, home again, jiggety jig

Then, 26 maps later, we're back to the castle for a final showdown with the big cheese of this rather lovely universe. After tackling the Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse in each of the other domains (sat on four brilliantly animated rides), you should be more than ready to take on an old, fat, god-like Eidolon, right?

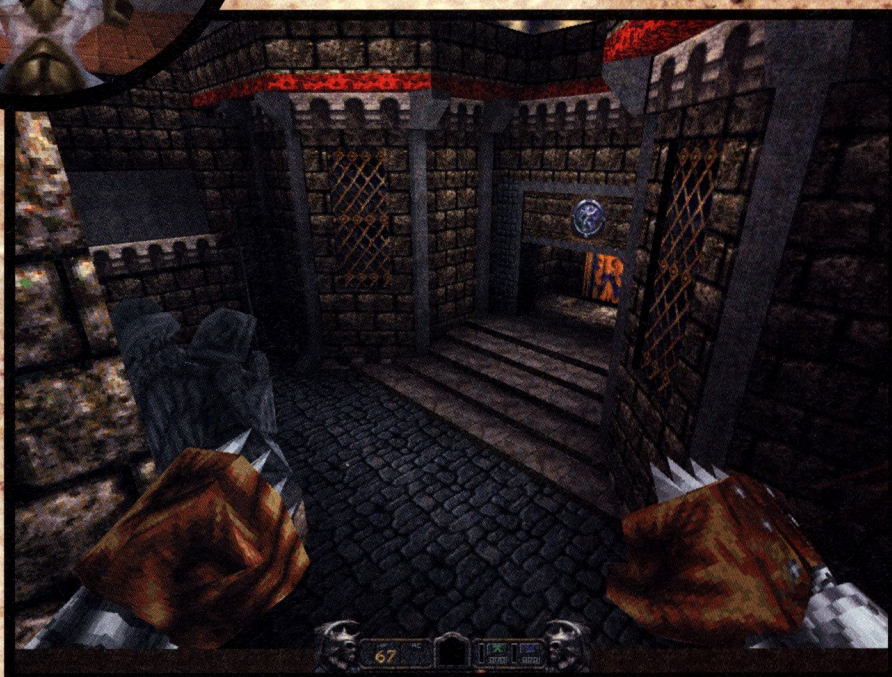
Of course, no suite of levels would be complete without a huge staff of resident 'monsties'. Hexen aficionados will notice re-runs of famous Hexen bad guys here, notably the gargoyles, golems and skull wizards. The menagerie is now swollen with scorpions and spiders (all the girls say "Aaaaaaaeeeeeeeeee"), were-jaguars and panthers, mummies, Medusae, fallen angels and the underwater Hydra. Every character is exquisitely modelled and animated in glorious Quake-o-vision.

The spiders scuttle realistically, in typical girl-scaring fashion, making little cartilage-on-cobblestone noises. The Knight Archers clamber out of the shadows, turn to face you, delicately pull back their bow strings and let rip with a highly damaging 'magic bolt'. The skull wizards mince around in their multicoloured cassocks, disdainfully lobbing volleys of flaming skulls at your exact location.

The were-jaguars, making out like Thundercats, execute neat little judo-rolls and abruptly rear up right next to you, growling, salivating and thrusting their little serrated



(Left) Another genital-free gargoyle about to bite the dust. (Below) If your PC doesn't sport a juicy 3Dfx card, maybe you'd like to run the game in hi-res. We think it looks better, somehow crisper and more in your face, but hey – you decide.



Power-ups

Hexen II features most of the cool power-ups seen in its predecessor, as well as a few newbies and a couple of oldies pilfered from *Heretic*. Over 20 separate items can be gathered in your adventures. Alongside stuff like armour, mana and health, you also get:

DISC OF REPULSION

Knocks projectiles and creatures away from you.

ICON OF THE DEFENDER

As per *Hexen*, this makes you invincible, but the effect depends on your character class. One turns into stone, one becomes incorporeal, one has magic spheres that absorb the damage etc.

TOME OF POWER

A la Heretic, it powers up all the weapons,

giving them a new effect and doing tons more damage. Think Quad Power in *Quake*.

POLYMORPH

The equivalent of the chicken/pig thing in *Hexen* and *Heretic*. Turns monsters (or deathmatch opponents) into sheep.

DISPLACEMENT DEVICE

Teleports to safety a cowardly player who isn't man enough to stand up to a few car-sized spiders.

RING OF WATER BREATHING

Does what it says on the tin.

TORCH

Lights an area for a limited amount of time. Very handy in this game where black is indeed black.

CRATER OF MIGHT

Fills your mana to brimming. Worth storing for later battles.

swords in your gob. Gargoyles flap flappily around, while below the Medusae make sucking motions with their blow-up doll mouths. Meanwhile, as you total your latest golem, it sinks slowly to its knees and then topples over. The were-cat flips over into a crumpled heap as you land a fatal blow. The fallen angels shriek and vaporise in a geyser of blood. Sorcerers sort of explode, leaving a few lickle deadly spiders in their wake.

Monstie morsels

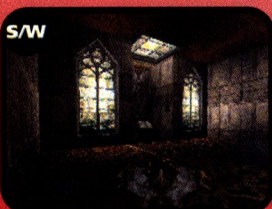
In fact, all of the creatures expire in a very satisfying manner – if not into gibs then into spraying whirlpools of ichor. They may be dead, but you're not finished with

GL versus software

Some see the rise and rise of 3Dfx and other 3D accelerator cards as a good thing. And it is, without a doubt, a very good thing. But others – including myself – cannot help but feel slightly perturbed by the whole thing.

3D acceleration is the future. In two years time, every gaming PC will have one. Until then, most people will be confined to unaccelerated or 'software' versions of their games. Timing-wise, *Hexen II* is a yardstick. It's the first 3D shooter to be shipped with built-in 3Dfx support, whereas other games have relied on later patches. And it looks glorious in GL. But it's important to note that practically everything – every particle, every texture, every lighting effect, every animation and glorious chunk of architecture – in the 3D accelerated version exists in the software version, except for real-time shadows and texture smoothing. No, it doesn't look as good, but it still looks great.

Raven have created a precedent here. From now on, until everyone starts throwing GL parties and dropping the phrase 'trilinear filtering' into pub conversations, there's simply no excuse to dump GL features just because it's too 'hard' or 'doesn't work as well'. That's sloppy programming. *Hexen II* has set a precedent. It looks great in software and in GL. The others had better follow its lead. (*Blimey – Ed.*)



that its quarrels will occasionally stick in the walls. Then comes the Gladius Of Striking, which fires exploding snakes and should be avoided at all costs.

Wizard prang

Hexen II is more than just Quake transplanted into a sword 'n' sorcery setting. The Raven boys have tweaked, tinkered, recast, redesigned, tarted up, reprogrammed and lavished all sorts of wizardry on what has hitherto been frowned upon as



“Gameplay has been fine-tuned to balance combat and exploring.”

a staid genre. For a start, there are hundreds more minutes of single-player fun to be had. The gameplay has been fine-tuned to balance combat and exploring. The puzzles are cool and work to push you around the maps.

Here's an example. After smacking your way through a titantic level, you dispatch your last skull wizard and sink, groaning, into a pool of mysterious-looking liquid. It could be Radox, but it isn't. It's magical goo and it says to you: "You need the bone dust of Loric to finish the spell."

"Jeez," you mutter, and clamber back to the main hub, which is heavy-going on the bridges you rashly blew up. After a pitched battle with some gargoyles, you wrestle the bones from their ionised remains and toddle back to the 'bath'. But the liquid ain't happy. "Get the bone dust, thickie," it insists. You slap it around a bit, but it doesn't do much good. Then you remember the huge great mill which is the centrepiece of the level. "Ah," your poor mammalian brain thinks, "I can grind the bones up."

Correct-o-mungous. Our survey says 'ping' etc. So you complete the spell and celebrate by washing your caked warrior's willy and taking a breathless shit in that jumped-up pool of ooze (who's the boss now, eh?).

Each puzzle-solving endeavour boosts your experience points; these pump up your level and in turn have an affect on your character, endowing him with special abilities, such as higher jumps, faster movement and extra mana capacity. So, in that crude fashion so typical of RPG, your character develops, becoming harder and ballsier as the game progresses.

(Below) Some more examples of *Hexen II*'s riotous architecture (below right) A familiar screenshot for anyone who's played *Quake*.



◀ them yet. You can chop up bits of monster meat, again and again and again. You can also jump on top of their sizzling carcasses and do a little dance. And even when they're alive, you can leap on them and give them a Sweeney Todd. There may be something faintly ridiculous about punching a cow-sized scorpion to death, but there's nothing stupid about triumphantly jumping up and down on its blood-soaked body parts.

Naturally, the weapons are more than well-designed for the task. Each character gets four, starting with a hand-to-hand weapon and ending in some kind of thermo-nuclear device. The Crusader, for example, starts out with a hammer for scrapping, chopping and stabbing. He then graduates to a talon-shaped ice gun which fires deadly ice shards. You may, if you're relentless enough, turn your opponent into a frozen statue; one biff of your hammer and it'll shatter. After that, you come across the glorious Meteor Staff – a voluptuous killing machine that's capable of exploding most enemies into gobs of glowing gibs. However, a word of warning: if you're not careful, the Meteor Staff may well send you streaking through the sky as well.

The Necro's close-up weapon is a gold-braided sickle, but he soon learns the virtue of projectile weaponry with the magic missile, cast from a gnarled, yellow-fingernailed hand and a spellbook. Next up from that are Bone Shards (deeply penetrative marrow missiles), and finally the Staff Of Set, which projects weird death at right angles (use it and you'll see exactly what I mean).

Assassins start off with a katar – which is basically just a posh name for a punch dagger – and follow that up with a poisoned sword. Then you get the mighty crossbow, which can twang enemies from miles away – you'll notice



Candid camera

Raven have also given thought to some of the main problems that surfaced in *Hexen*. Puzzling used to be fraught with annoyance. After fighting through an army of gargoyles, wrestling with earthquakes and collapsing parapets, you'd finally reach the all-important switch and flick it. A message would say: "A door opens on another level." And you'd say: "Duh? Where the freak is that door?"

Then you'd trail through countless corridors, battling respawned monsties in a vain effort to track down that godforsaken portal. In *Hexen II*, Raven have utilised Quake's clever camera feature to show you intimately and unequivocally the result of your switching.

After the glory of the architecture and sheer fun of the gameplay, *Hexen II*'s next-best feature is the flotilla of nice touches which not only distinguish it from *Quake*, but have you squawking "Coool!" at every turn. There's gravity on lifts; they start slowly and gradually accelerate



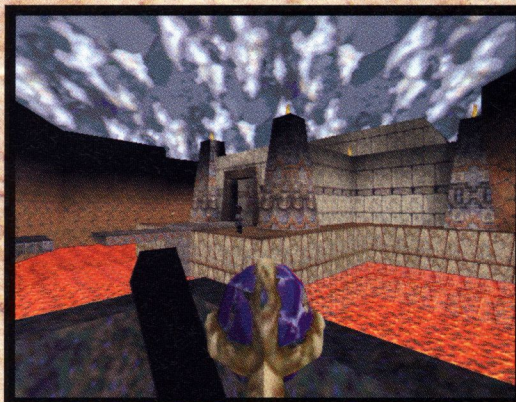
(Above) Ah, Madame La Guillotine (screengrab by the Marquis De Sade). (Left) BleeEEEEEEEE! A horrible scorpion.

– a subtle touch, but welcome all the same. You can push things too, moving stone blocks and weighty monoliths out of the way. Also, darkness is truly darkness in *Hexen II*. You can be strolling obliviously round a shadow-draped cavern when three scorpions, a spider and two fallen angels suddenly jump you out of the inky blackness, so you have to check every corner and overhang.

The smoke and particle effects are nothing short of fantastic and the more pyrotechnic weapons will leave glowing embers, dust and magic debris floating in the air. Gibs fountain blood, but they also spurt and splatter and form pleasant little whirlwinds.

To cap it all, you can crouch. It may seem like a small feature, but in a way it's a symbol for the un-*Quake*-likeness of the whole game. Sure, *Hexen II* uses the *Quake* engine – the main ingredient in the recipe for a bland, homogenous clone – but Ravensoft have added enough subtle tweaks, huge dollops of new visuals, a sprinkling of neat touches and a twist of effort to create a huge, tasty gameplay gateau. And this is one of those Germanic gateaux – frosted that, creamy this – which leaves you feeling bloated and ill after 20 hours devouring it.

Hexen II is the first of the new wave of *Quake*-based 3D shooters. Soon to follow in its wake are *Quake II*, *Jedi Knight*, *Unreal*, *Half Life* and *Daikatana*. And they'd better be good, because this is simply nothing short of fab. **Z**



(Above) And finally, a joyous little screenshot, showing off *Hexen II*'s GL-enhanced transparent lava. Coool.

Deathmatch

We'll come clean – the version of *Hexen II* we reviewed didn't have a workable version of deathmatch implemented. We don't care. You know why? Because *Hexen II* is a damn fine single-player game, we love it and we want to smother it with butterfly kisses and leave 'pleasure paint' on our bedding. What we do know about the deathmatch mode is that it will use the *Quake* network engine, have support for 16 players, allow you to set 'Random character class' when you respawn and ship with a custom deathmatch hub with five levels or so. Oh, and you'll be able to rocket jump, enter and leave games and get really addicted to it. Just like *Quake*'s deathmatch.



In Perspective

Two years on from the original *Hexen* (94%), a year since *Quake* (96%) – and *Hexen II* is better than both of them. Technology and gameplay have marched on, but it still gets a thumbs-up 94.

Hexen II

Quake

Hexen

Heretic

Stonekeep

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: Pentium

Graphics: VGA/SVGA/3Dfx

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse, keyboard, joystick

Note: You're gonna need a P133 or better we reckon, to get the best from it.



Score

See the large number below.



Price: £39.95

Release date: November

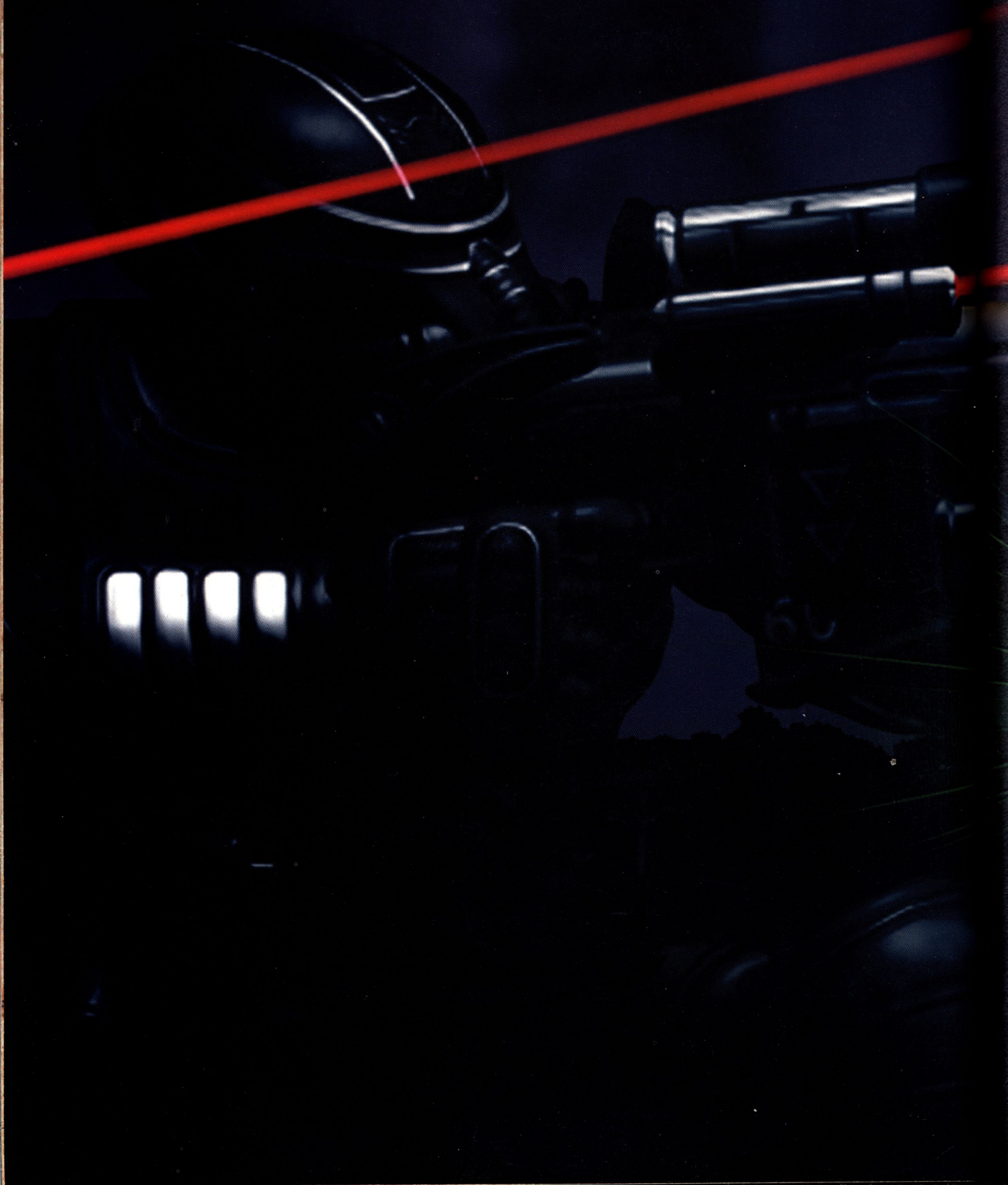
Publisher: Activision

Telephone: 01895 456700

Website: www.activision.com

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

The Salvation Army





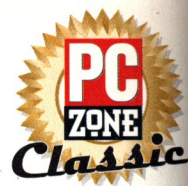
My name is Legion: for we are many. Mark 5:9

7TH LEGION

MICRO PROSE

<http://www.microprose.com>

LBA 2: Twinsen's Odyssey



Charlie Brooker is the only person in the **PC Zone** office who remembers the TV series *Big John, Little John*. It was the story of a man who kept turning into a boy. Curiously enough, Charlie himself felt like a child – but not in the Michael Jackson sense – while succumbing to the delights of Adeline's *Little Big Adventure 2*.



(Above) Hey, hey we're the Esmers. And people say we make contact with new races, kidnap their children, and set about destroying their planets in an attempt to fulfil an absurd religious prophecy. But we're too busy singin'. To put anybody down.

THE AMERICANS ARE CRAP, EPISODE 5009: when the original (and defiantly French) *Little Big Adventure* was released Stateside, the overpaid, hollow-headed knuckle-draggers from the marketing department took umbrage at the quirky title. "Li'l Big Adventure? What in tarnation is that supposed to mean?" one of them (probably) bellowed. "It's a goddamned paradox, that's what it is," moaned another suit-encrusted, snake-eyed Damien. At which point a third dead-eyed, hair-gelled, power-dressing waste of semen proposed that they immediately change the name to something more straightforward and boring, to prevent Yankee customers suffering massive brain haemorrhages when confronted with the sight of a genuinely charming game title glaring at them from the shelves down at the local gargantuan Shop-U-Fux. So they racked their brains through 16 power lunches, finally settling upon the single most rubbish and inappropriate title possible: it was rechristened *Relentless*. They may as well have called it *Product #16,001*.

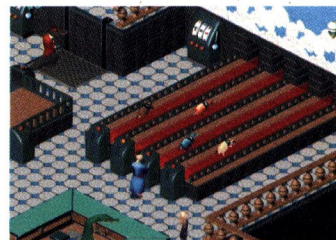
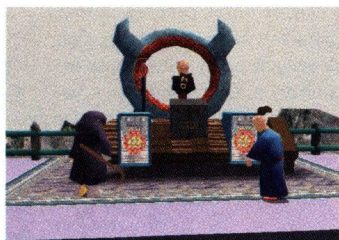
Well, the joke's on them now, because *Little Big Adventure 2* is here. What are they going to call *this* one over in IdiotLand? *Relentless 2*, *Relentless*? Or simply *Product #16,002*?

All the angles

Little Big Adventure 2 is great. The star of the show is the bizarrely-coiffured chap Twinsen, whose head looks a bit like a hard-boiled egg with a ponytail.

Say it in French

Little Big Adventure 2 has been translated from French by, we suspect, a Frenchman. Now, only a heartless nitpicker could fail to appreciate the enormity of such a task (there are thousands of lines of dialogue after all), but there are times when it goes somewhat awry, and the translation seems more than a little suspect, with characters mouthing stilted, awkward sentences, or occasionally saying things that are downright misleading. Also, the voiceover artists often emphasise the wrong word in a given sentence, lending a 'cheap Kung Fu movie' ambience to the soundtrack. It's not exactly a drawback – the game itself is still perfectly sound, and the disjointed nature of these exchanges actually adds to the game's overall 'other-worldly' air – but it *could* have been tackled with a little more finesse. Maybe in time for *LBA 3*, eh?



(Left) Some of the platform game sections are particularly unforgiving. (Above left) "Yes folks, tune in to Bravo on satellite and cable. We've got lots of ropery old 'cult' TV shows, a bit of manga, and tons of really great horror/shagging movies. It's great." (Middle) A camel, a car, and an elephant in a turban. If you're drinking Bacardi, gambling in the casino. (Right) My dog's coming in last. Typical. Still, I can always drown my sorrows. Fancy joining me in a pint of horse phlegm?



You can go all over the shop in *LBA 2*. For fun.

He's a national hero on his native planet, the similarly-named Twinsun, which is presumably why he gets away with dressing like a girl. Twinsun is a strange place: it's populated by talking elephants, rabbits and 'quetches' (a race of anthropomorphic beachballs), spattered with primary-coloured flora and fauna, and powered almost entirely by an unseen magical force.

Since this is a computer game, it isn't long before this life of carefree psychedelia is interrupted by the arrival of a lanky alien race calling themselves the Esmerians. They claim to have come on a goodwill mission, to share their scientific knowledge with the population of Twinsun. Obviously, this is bollocks. The Esmerians are Not Nice. Minutes after their jolly *Yellow Submarine*-style flying saucers touch down, they're hiding in dustbins, spying through peepholes, poking their collective nose in where it isn't welcome, brandishing firearms at the drop of a hat – and hatching a sinister plan which could threaten the future of the planet. Which is, of course, where you come in. What follows is an immense, sprawling adventure as Twinsun journeys from island to island – even planet to planet – in his attempt to thwart the Esmerian menace.

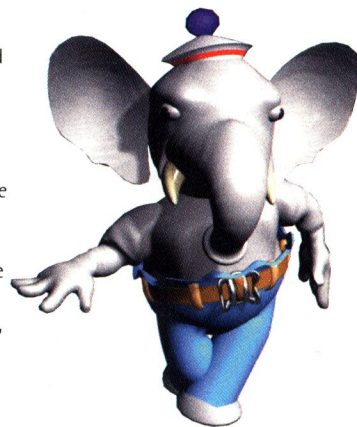
Gameplay

In spirit, *LBA 2* is an interactive cross between *The Magic Roundabout* and *The Crystal Maze*. As in the classic SNES version of *Zelda*, the action is split roughly 50-50 between



Is that a long neck, or are you just pleased to see me?

outdoor free-form adventuring, and indoor linear puzzling. And here's the first major change: the original *LBA* was played from a forced isometric perspective throughout, with static rendered graphics supplying the entire environment. This graphical style is retained in *LBA 2* – until the player steps outside. There, everything switches to super polygonal-landscape-o-vision, with a variety of viewpoints and an *Alone In The Dark*-style tracking camera. Thanks to the polygons, there's a greater variety of terrain than in the original game, and the excellent re-positionable camera – which can also be zoomed in or out – makes it easy to follow Twinsun's movements. The all-new lighting effects bring yet more atmosphere, an excellent example of which takes place at the beginning: the game opens during a raging storm, replete with flashes of lightning, rumbling thunder and torrential, driving rain.



"The SVGA graphics evoke memories of TinTin: Destination Moon."

Back indoors and it's static scenery and a single viewpoint again, which makes perfect sense once you start tackling the puzzles therein. These consist mainly of old-school style isometric platforming posers. Think *Knight Lore*, think *Get Dexter*, think *Head Over Heels*. Think: "This is driving me absolutely crazy, but I've got to make it through this bit because I want to see what happens next." Besides actively forcing you to

Four Become One

As in *LBA Uno*, Twinsun has four separate 'behaviour modes'. It's easy to swap between them at the touch of a button, and they all have different uses. Allow us to explain...

NORMAL SPICE

In 'normal' mode, Twinsun will wander around at a leisurely pace, making this the ideal mode for edging along narrow ledges and the like. He can also talk to people, or examine the furniture – just like you or I.

SPORTY SPICE

Whenever the situation calls for a little more 'oomph', switch to 'sporty' mode. Here, Twinsun acts like he's just ingested a large bowl of Kellogg's *Sustain* and three gallons of Lucozade (or at least, he acts like they act in the commercials for both those products). He can run around and leap across gaps. Lovely.

AGGRESSIVE SPICE

Enemies bearing down on you? Are their little fists pounding your face to a mushy red pulp? Don't stand for it. Change into 'aggressive' mode, in which Twinsun comes over all Cynthia Rothrock and starts leathering the shit out of all and sundry – which is nice.

DISCREET SPICE

When you don't want to draw attention to yourself, subtly switch to 'discreet' mode and tip-toe your way out of there. You can also scrunch yourself up into a wickle ball so the big bad monsters can't see woo. Ahhhh.

Thank God for that

LBA 1 was great, but it had quite a few irritating 'features'. Some of them have been sorted out in LBA 2. Such as the following:

- Twinsen no longer hurts himself every three seconds while running around.
- Thanks to a 'shortcut' key, it isn't necessary to switch into 'Normal' mode every time you want to talk to someone or search something.
- Twinsen can now sidestep quickly, and roll from side to side.
- You can save at any point in the game, not just at pre-defined moments.

BUT...

- Fighting is still a pain in the arse. Luck has too large a part to play in deciding most battles.
- The enemy AI is pretty lame. Characters often stand still, firing at obstacles instead of hunting you down.
- It isn't always clear which parts of the scenery you can walk on or jump across. Water is a prime example: in some sections, you can run through it. At other points, you automatically drown if you so much as dip a toe in.
- The voiceovers are still sodding irritating.

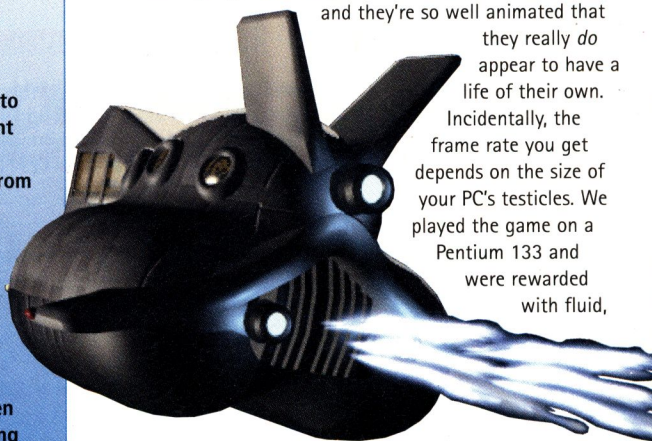
◀ concentrate fully on the task at hand, the isometric perspective is essential to this style of gameplay – without it, it just wouldn't be feasible.

Astonishing visuals abound. The SVGA graphics are superbly designed, with a French sci-fi comic book feel throughout: extremely stylised, complex, and curiously retro –



(In circle) At one point in the game, Twinsen finds himself banged up in Stoke Newington nick. (*Er... allegedly – Ed.*) (Above left) Murray Walker kindly agreed to provide commentary for this caption: "And! Twinsen! Takes! The! Lead! Leaving! His! Opponents! Standing! Still! At! 200mph!" (Left) Here's Twinsen posing for a photograph outside his lovely home – 25 Cromwell Street it ain't. (Middle) Wearing a cunning 'Wizard' disguise, Twinsen sneaks onboard an Esmerian ship. That stewardess looks like a bit of alright. Wonder what the chances of joining the 300,000,000 Mile High Club are? (Right) Nice tent, that. £39.99 from Argos, you know. Yeah, really. £39.99. Incredible.

evoking memories of the likes of *TinTin: Destination Moon*. Every one of the many characters Twinsen encounters on his travels is blessed with genuine personality, thanks to imaginative design and animation. They're intricate – so intricate in fact that they appear to have been painstakingly constructed by a highly skilled watchmaker, using special miniature polygons and a pair of microscopic tweezers – and they're so well animated that



they really do appear to have a life of their own. Incidentally, the frame rate you get depends on the size of your PC's testicles. We played the game on a Pentium 133 and were rewarded with fluid, super-smooth motion throughout. God alone knows how it'll perform on a Pentium II 266 – the characters probably leap out of the screen and sit on your lap. And wiggle around suggestively. Or something like that. Oh, and the accompanying orchestral soundtrack also deserves a mention – it's by turns uplifting, ominous, comical and dramatic, but never intrusive (except for the bit that sounds a bit like bloody *Riverdance*).

An enticing little number

Perhaps the *greatest* thing about the whole shebang is the way all the puzzles are seamlessly intertwined. Twinsen seems to effortlessly wander into problem upon problem, most of them nested together in a manner which, if the puzzles weren't so enjoyable, would have you hollering swearwords like an entrant in the 1997 Italian-American Profanity Olympics. In Twinsen's world, if you wanted to go to the toilet, you'd have to catch a ferry to Toilet Island, which would mean juggling fire at a local circus in order to earn enough money for the ferry ticket first – and when you got to the island, the toilet itself would be hidden at the centre of a subterranean labyrinth and guarded by a giant sabre-toothed lemur. Once you'd conquered *that* set of problems, there wouldn't be any paper, so you'd have to fly to the moon and buy some from a lunar bog roll salesman. On paper, it sounds infuriating. In-game, it's curiously compelling. *Little Big Adventure 2* is one of those rare titles that can keep you up way past your bedtime, several nights on the trot. Try to play it during a week off if you can. **Z**

In Perspective

The *Little Big Adventure* games are so unique, they can't really be compared to many contemporary titles. Here we've listed a few similar games (and activities) to see how they measure up.

Ecstastica 2

City Of Lost Children

Knight Lore (ZX Spectrum)

Watching Teletubbies

Dressing up like Teletubbies and rolling around, on something

Little Big Adventure 1

Little Big Adventure 2

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: 486DX4/100

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, joystick



Score

And you thought *Teletubbies* was trippy.



Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Adeline/Electronic Arts

Telephone: 01753 549442

Website: www.ea.com/100723,2464

@compuserve.com (Adeline Software)

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Personal Computers



ETHICAL

LARA CROFT

LOADED & IRRESISTIBLE



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trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

TOMB
RAIDER II

COMING
SOON
ON:



EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

FIFA Soccer Manager

Guidelines for football management game intro:
1) General football joke; 2) Joke at expense of reviewer (eg the stupidity of Patrick McCarthy); and references to a sheepskin coat if room.

7 IF YOU OR I WERE PUTTING TOGETHER A football management game for a company the size of EA, with all their resources and ability to entice top programmers and game designers, I'd look at every other management game that's ever been made to work out what makes a good one, throw out all the irritating bits that are always slagged off in reviews, steal all the best bits and put it all together in a shiny, easy-to-use whole. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, EA don't agree. They seem to have decided that they can just make any old game and it will sell anyway. Maybe they're right.

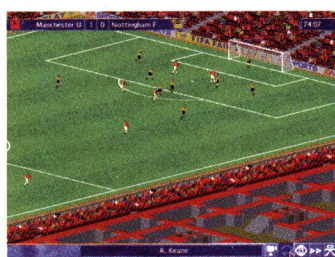
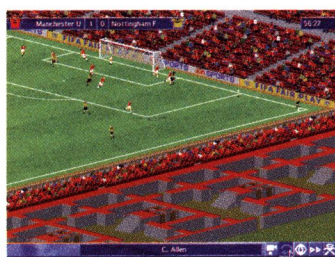
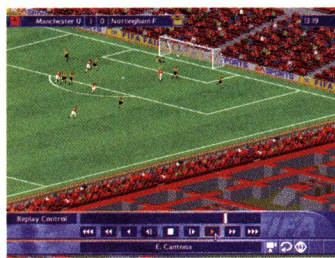
So what's wrong with it?

It's not a bad game, as such – but it doesn't offer anything new. There are three good games out there already that cover just about everything anyone could want from a football management game, whether it's graphically-challenged, no-nonsense realism or the bells-and-whistles approach of watching a game played out in front of you. To enter the fray now you'd need to have something extra – a point that EA would appear to have overlooked.

It also has a number of idiosyncrasies. For example, even the simple act of just selecting a team and formation is a thoroughly bizarre procedure. It would take too much space to explain its weirdness in full, so I'll just say it's as if someone



(Above) The part all true fans live for in a game – the finance screens.



Manchester U	Nottingham F
1 P. Schmeichel	1 M. Crossley
12 P. Neville	5 S. Chettle
6 G. Pallister	4 C. Cooper
4 D. May	25 S. Blatherwick
3 D. Irwin	18 A. Hauland
11 R. Giggs	3 S. Pearce
10 D. Beckham	14 I. Woan
16 R. Keane	17 C. Allen
8 N. Butt	11 S. Stone
20 O. Soshkijer	12 P. van Hooijdonk
7 E. Cantona	22 B. Roy
17 R. van der Gouw	13 A. Furtis
19 R. Johnsen	31 B. O'Neil
2 G. Neville	6 C. Bart-Williams
14 J. Crayff	9 D. Saunders
15 K. Polonsky	10 K. Campbell

(Above) No expense has been spared on the pre-match presentation screen. (Left) A series of in-match grabs in which anything could be happening, really.

thought: "Right, that would be the convenient and obvious way to select a team. Now, how would Edward de Bono turn it into a puzzle?" Some of the positions are also really weirdly placed. The whole thing takes a while to get used to, especially if you're accustomed to any of the other football management games that are more intuitive (ie all of them).

Innovative feature shock

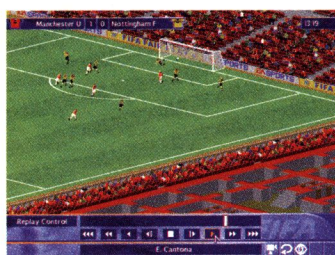
Actually, I apologise. I have noticed one feature that's absent in other games – you can see on a drop-down menu how players rate in various positions. Darren Anderton, for example, rates 78 as an attacking mid-fielder, 50 as a central defender and 82 in a free role. (Or 100 in a hospital test-case role.) Steady now.

You can give up to three individual instructions to a player, such as shoot on sight, run with ball, long ball game or crossing game (isn't that what children do on railway lines?), but you can select what would appear to be contradictory instructions – your central defender could be playing a possession, long ball and passing game at the same time. A bit odd, really – and you can't give them to squad members in advance, just those on the pitch. (While we're on the subject, they seem to have 'orders' and 'style' mixed up. To me, 'style' means the way the team plays, while 'orders' suggests individual instructions – but here it's the other way round.)

Big number theory

On the stats front, EA have gone completely over the top. They obviously want to sell the game in America (hence you 'borrow' players instead of loaning them), so presumably they

"It's the football management equivalent of premature ejaculation."



feel they have to pander to the national obsession. And that means 13 basic stats with 16 sub-stats. For example, the skill rating breaks down into individual shooting, passing, heading, control and dribbling ratings. I wouldn't mind, but for all EA's claims, I didn't really feel convinced that these stats were being played out as I watched a match.

They've nicked the training schedule thing from *USM2*. It's a simplified version (you deal in whole days, rather than parts of a day), and without an assistant to help if you get bogged down, it can be a bit dull. But again, the weird button



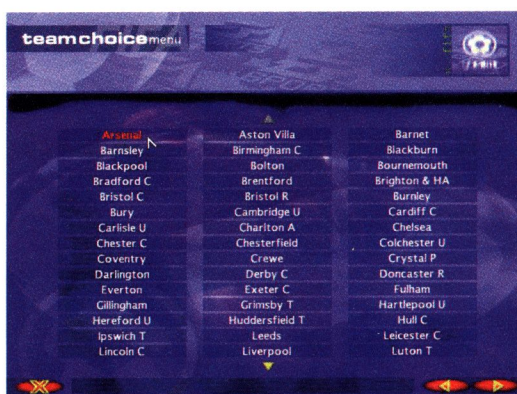
(Above, from top) The results screen; two team selection screens showing the icon-based in-game navigation system in all its glory; and perhaps the most visually splendid of all, the initial team choice screen. You can take your sunglasses off now and look away (but make sure you do that in the right order).

has been pushed. Among training titles such as heading, passing, zonal defence, tackling etc is 'exercise'. Anyway, there are different ways to train your players – click on Position and it will automatically fill in the selected training regime for the whole week; click on a day and it gives that training to everyone for that day; or if you have nothing better to do, click on the selected training speciality and alter each one individually by day. But it doesn't really feel like a worthwhile pursuit – especially if you play the instant result version.

The match

There are two ways to play a match – you can either watch it being played out at one of two speeds on an isometric pitch by piddly little pin-men, or you can see an instantly generated scoreline. Also, I've played through seasons both ways and the scores seen when watching the match are consistently higher than when you just see a result. Calculated scores against Newcastle were of the 2-0, 2-1 variety, whereas the match results were 7-2, 8-3 and so on. Something's

wrong somewhere. And nor is there any sense that subtle computations affect calculated matches. It's like the football management equivalent of premature ejaculation – all over far too quickly and you're left feeling vaguely unsatisfied. Overall, it's a lacklustre effort – team selection is fiddly and annoying,



there's nothing to make you feel that this is real-life football and it uses an icon-based control system that's right out of the days of the Amiga. Considering that this is a new entry into the market from a major software house, *FIFA Soccer Manager* doesn't offer anything that you can't get with any of the other big three management games – and they're better put together and more fun to play. I can't think of a single reason why you should spend hard-earned money on this instead of any other management game. **7**

In Perspective

As you can see from our award-winning election night-style chart, *Championship Manager 2* is still rated most highly of all football management games, followed by some others. Bear in mind when you look at this that *CM2* shows every sign of getting even better in the near future. We're so excited at the prospect that we have to wear cricket boxes if we want to stand up straight.

Championship Manager 2

Premier Manager 3

Ultimate Soccer Manager 2

FIFA Soccer Manager

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: Pentium

Graphics: SVGA/VGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse/keyboard



Score

There's nothing here we haven't seen in any other football management game.



Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

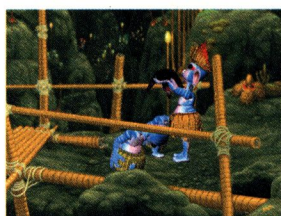
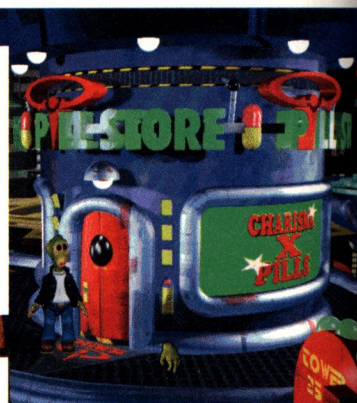
Publisher: Electronic Arts

Telephone: 01753 549442

Website: <http://www.easports.com>

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

The Feeble Files



Is the trusty old point-and-click adventure dead? Welcome to the new school of old school, with your ever-genial host, **Steve Hill.**

(Above) A selection of scenes from the graphically sumptuous, highly polished *Feeble Files*. Shame that it's very boring and deeply unfunny.

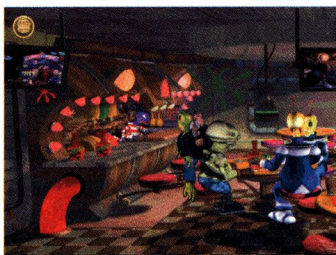
Farmers' jape falls flat on its backside). Following a collision with the Voyager II probe, Feeble finds himself banged up in the slammer where he meets token love interest Delores. Delores is a revolutionary intent on overthrowing the OmniBrain, a *Wizard Of Oz*-style all-seeing, all-knowing mass intelligence that lords it over society, keeping the population subdued with a selection of 'happy pills'. The inevitable high-jinks ensue.

"The Feeble Files is heavily referential, doffing its cap at several icons of popular culture."

It's culture, innit

As is par for the course, *The Feeble Files* is heavily referential, doffing its cap at several icons of popular culture, particularly those of a cinematic persuasion. The *Star Wars* bar scene is resurrected once again, there's a passable *James Bond* pastiche, and even John Carpenter's semi-classic *They Live!* is heavily aspired to. Whereas it can occasionally be interesting to spot the influences, this kind of Tarantino-esque pilfering by no means guarantees a good game. Ultimately, all it really means is that those responsible have watched a lot of films and are short on original ideas.

Predictably, the game is packed with zany humour, and is probably what marketing paraphernalia would describe as 'a riot', albeit without the violence, fear, disorientated policemen and distressed horses. Despite its loud claims of hilarity, in all the time that *The Feeble Files* was on heavy rotation in the PC Zone gaming arena, not a single person



It's like that great bar scene in *Star Wars*. That's never been done before.



HAVING PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED ITSELF as one of the mainstays of PC gaming, the traditional point-and-click adventure is rapidly becoming something of an endangered species. Doyens of the genre,

Adventure Soft, have been rather quiet since the release of their two *Simon The Sorcerer* titles, games that almost hark back to a more innocent era, when people were just as happy to use their mouse to point-and click as fire and strafe.

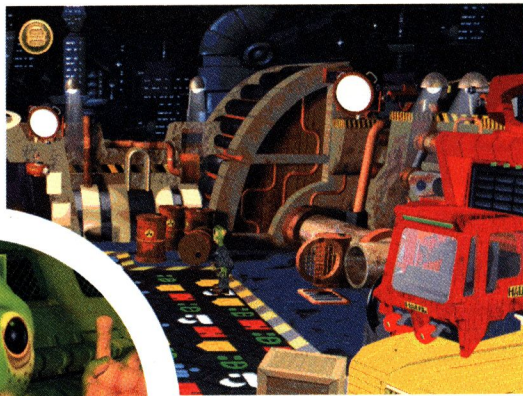
So, with a blue moon looming, we are presented with *The Feeble Files*, a name that immediately asks for trouble from unimaginative reviewers. To all intents and purposes, it's your standard point-and-click affair, but the programmers have obviously got hold of a fancy graphics package and are determined to tell the world about it. While not quite mooted a return to the days of 'North', 'South', 'East', 'West', 'Talk to Gandalf', there comes a point when this is nothing more than just showing off, as demonstrated by the interminable intro sequence, replete with all manner of graphical trickery intended to whet the appetite for what is to follow.

Meet The Feebles

Of course, adventure games have to have a plot, and so here's a brief outline of what you can expect. Feeble is an alien of the typical green-skinned, bog-eyed cartoonish variety. Feeble by name etc, he stumbles into mither en route from blemishing planet Earth with some crop circles (there's nothing like being topical, but this kind of tedious Young



(Above) Delores has unfortunately been turned into a squid. (Centre) His name is Feeble and his gait is strange. (Right) Some other stuff.



Screen test

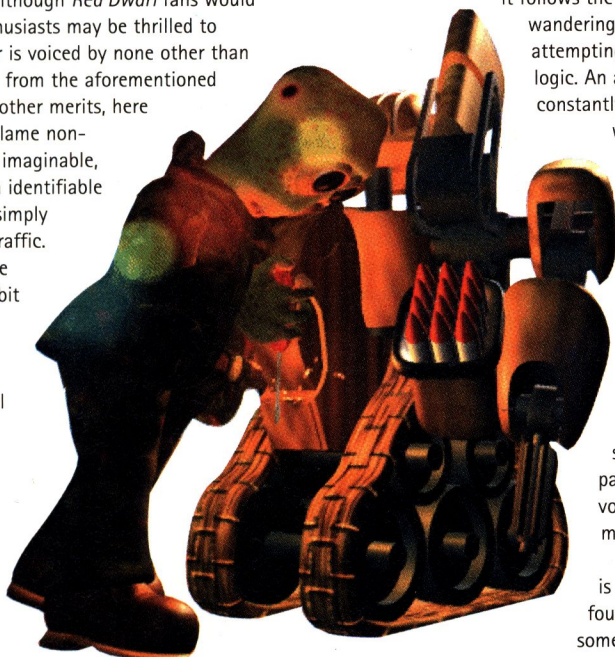
The interface is much of a muchness, the right-mouse button looping through the various options, although having the inventory on a separate screen is a little irksome. The sub-Crystal Maze-style puzzles that pop up here and there are largely mind-numbing trial and error affairs, and there is also the odd annoying pseudo-arcade section. In the main though,

it follows the standard pattern of wandering around in frustration attempting improbable leaps of logic. An adventure game should constantly keep you on your toes,

with a firm idea of your objectives and some kind of gameplan towards achieving them. You should be genuinely pleased to stumble across a cut-scene, listening intently for further clues. In *Feeble*, these are ten a penny and virtually all unwatchable snippets decorated by that painful generic 'comedy' voice (try and imagine a more confident Mr Bean).

In its defence, the game is pretty big (occupying four CDs, count 'em) and some people will inevitably

play this game until the very end, but with *Monkey Island 3* now imminent, fans of the genre who hark back to the days when adventure games left you feeling warm inside, should perhaps wait a little longer. **Z**



managed the faintest of smirks, the stock reaction being one of dismay, boredom and even a modicum of sympathy for your embittered reviewer.

Comedy and science fiction are not always the most comfortable of bedfellows, although *Red Dwarf* fans would obviously disagree. Said enthusiasts may be thrilled to learn that the lead character is voiced by none other than Robert Llewellyn, aka Kryten from the aforementioned series. Whatever the actor's other merits, here he adopts the worst kind of lame non-descript tum-te-tum accent imaginable, which rather than adding an identifiable dimension to the character simply makes you want to play in traffic. The supplementary voices are of a similar ilk and it's all a bit *Spitting Image* – which isn't really surprising as it was this series that kept many of the voice actors in gainful employment. This kind of sixth-form humour may have raised a chuckle in 1983, but in an age where even irony is ironic and cynics are becoming cynical about cynicism, simply saying "crap" or "directive 742" in a 'funny' voice no longer cuts the m-m-mustard.

Shuddup that now!

Having failed to acquire the licence for *The Beastie Boys'* exemplary *Sabotage* to accompany the intro, Adventuresoft have settled for 102nd best and come up with the long-forgotten *Def Con One* by the thankfully now disbanded Pop Will Eat Itself (although worrying rumours do persist). For those who managed to bypass the 'career' of these Brummie soap dodgers, PWEI were the kind of mediocre oxygen thieves that clueless first-year students would 'mosh' to while wearing in their first pair of Doc Martens and drinking watered-down piss masquerading as beer. Also see: Ned's Atomic Dustbin, The Wonder Stuff, Jesus Jones, EMF, Carter The (still apparently) Unstoppable Sex Machine, Scorpio Rising, Mega City Four...

Appearing at a taxi rank near you.



(Above) Unfortunately, a game of noughts and crosses is able to hold the attention for longer than *The Feeble Files*.

In Perspective

At the risk of being labelled a Luddite, when it comes to adventure games there's often more value to be had in 'kickin' it old-school.' Superfluous visceral enhancements can sometimes obscure the gameplay and 3D graphics often make it difficult to spot exits or relevant objects. In *The Feeble Files*, many of the cut-scenes seem to have been included purely for the sake of it and add nothing to the game, detracting from the action. And none of us wants that.

The Feeble Files

Monkey Island 1 & 2

Simon The Sorcerer 1 & 2

Discworld 1 & 2

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: Pentium 75

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse



Score

Sadly, a failure of style over content.

50

Price: £39.99

Release date: August

Publisher: Adventure Soft

Telephone: 0121 308 8900

Website: www.adventuresoft.com

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Personal Computers

Conquest Earth

It's Tuesday. It's a *Command & Conquer* clone. It must be
Paul Presley.

7

IT'S ALL 'ALIENS INVADING THE EARTH' at the moment, isn't it? Independence Day, Mars Attacks!, Dark Skies, Grant from EastEnders. Every time you turn around there's some sort of alien invasion storyline going on. The BBC are even putting together a home-grown sci-fi series called *Invasion Earth* – which just goes to show how popular this stuff is. The BBC never make home-grown sci-fi. Except *Bugs*. Oh, and *Crime Traveller*. And they were both crap.

Conquest Earth is testimony to the fact that even the humble computer game isn't safe from other worldly plans. Remember that probe NASA sent into Jupiter a while ago? Apparently it killed a few native Jovians on the way in and now they've decided to pay us back in the only way they know how: killing all of us and taking over the Earth.

Conquest Earth is all about said invasion. The difference being that you don't have to play as the Earthlings,

defending the planet. If you've ever harboured deep-rooted megalomaniacal desires to conquer all that you can see, the game lets you act them out by taking the part of the Jovian invasion force.



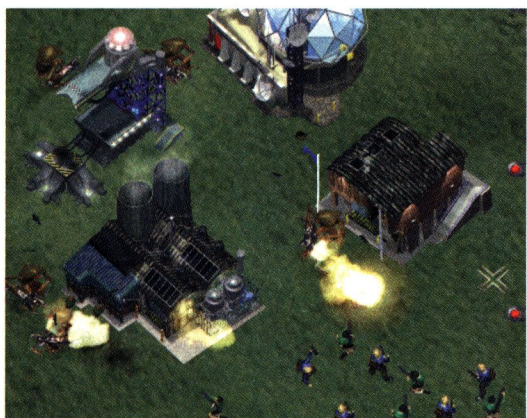
There are also two ways of playing each side: arcade mode or strategy mode. The former is simply a sequential list of ground missions, each progressively harder than before. The latter is a more involving campaign game. On the human side you have to monitor the globe, allocating resources to different cities, building up troops and conducting research, all the while predicting where the aliens will strike next. When an attack is detected, you send troops to that location and carry out the attack as before.

On the alien side you have to do much the same, except instead of building up defences, you have to search for large deposits of sulphur, try to conquer territories that will aid your cause and gradually take over the planet.

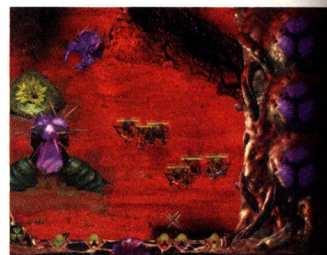
I've already looked at the score...

So what is my problem with *Conquest Earth*? For a start the troops are dumb. They behave stupidly despite their so-called high artificial intelligence. The ability to give different kinds of orders to them is great, but seeing a bunch of troops just standing around getting shot without moving or returning fire simply because the enemy is out of their 'range' is infuriating. It's a game of contrasts. Lots of good ideas outweighing lots of bad realities. The concept of planning strategies that the game allows is great. But having said that, the inability to easily carry out said strategies because of a 'fiddly' control interface is bad.

What I want from an artificial intelligence routine in a strategy game is to have troops that know how to defend themselves. Knowing they are being fired upon is one thing, getting out of the way of the bullets is



(Top left) Rockets can be launched with the right equipment in order to deploy satellites. These let you zoom in and out of the screen, check on weather conditions and fire defence lasers. (Bottom left) Part of the human player's job is to build and protect a base camp. (Bottom right) Okay, now that's just cheating.



something else. *Conquest Earth* is by no means the only game to suffer from this hiccup; certainly most C&C-style games don't seem to have overcome it either. It's just unfortunate that *Conquest Earth* highlights this problem for all to see. When one of my soldiers starts getting fired upon he's smart enough to be able to return fire (providing the enemy is within range), but just standing in the open shooting back isn't enough. I want him to take cover behind a rock or tree, to hit the deck or to try and get out of the enemy's range.

Is it fair to lambaste the game simply because it suffers the same faults as every other game? Maybe not, but the point is these are faults that desperately need to be rectified before the games in this genre can really start to grow beyond being C&C clones with different graphics.

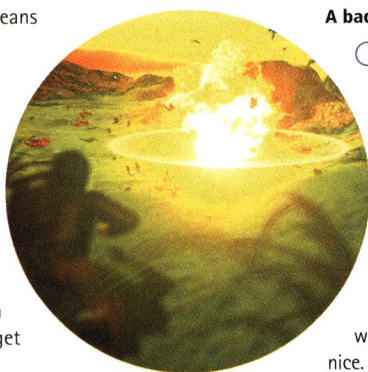
As I said, *Conquest Earth* does have some nice ideas: the waypoints, the order types and the ability to play the game in essentially four different ways. I'm also pleased to say that the difference between playing on one side or the other is more than just a cosmetic one. There aren't a lot of

"It's a pity it doesn't stand out from the crowd of C&C clones."

differences when you get right down to the bare bones of the gameplay, but the alien player does have a few extra abilities to toy with – morphing, silicon mining, *Predator*-style invisibility etc – that make things just different enough to be worthwhile.

Time to get poncey

There's a kind of internal dichotomy taking place with *Conquest Earth*. One side of it, the inner side, wants to say, "Look, I'm strategic. I have lots to offer the thinking player. I'm deep." But there's the outer surface that seems to scream, "Action! Action! Action! Guns, explosions, bombs, aliens, attack! Keep click, click, clicking that mouse button for your Pavlovian rewards." (*I think you're starting to lose your audience – Ed.*)



A bad day at the Teddy Bear's picnic.

It's a cross between the complexity of *Red Alert* and the simplicity of *Cannon Fodder* (Good, you're back on more familiar territory now – Ed.), while not quite achieving the sheer playability of either. I'm not saying it's a bad game. It isn't. On some levels (mental, not in-game), it's quite playable and there is a sort of urge to stick with it that takes you over after a while, if only because the presentation is so nice. It's just a pity that it doesn't do anything

to stand out from the crowd of C&C clones that are currently engulfing our lives like an army of unoriginality. It's a co-star in the strategy genre's life story. A possible nomination for 'Best Supporting Role', but unlikely to win.

The 'strategy' levels (or campaign mode) do give the game an interesting twist, but there's nothing you haven't really seen outside of any decent resource-management game. Lots of R&D to develop new troops, lots of allocation of forces, lots of construction orders for different cities. The use of satellites on the human side is interesting – charting wind patterns, firing SDI lasers and so on. Another example of the game's overwhelming desire to please with nice ideas. In fact, I can't remember the last time I played a game that was so eager to be liked. The team at Data Design are certainly an enthusiastic bunch of people and that enthusiasm is very apparent in the game. Which is perhaps why you do get the urge to stay with it, despite the faults.

The worst part of my job

But sadly those faults are there and it's for that reason that the game hasn't achieved a higher score. It's fiddly. The troops are fairly dumb. It can't decide what it wants to be. I feel like I'm stabbing a friendly relative in the back, but I have no choice. It's good, but...

I would offer this piece of advice to anyone who does have a similar game still in the pipeline, though. The best games, the games that have truly stood out throughout the short period of time that gaming history has taken up, have been those games that didn't look at their rivals to see what they should be doing – only better – but those games that have said, "We're doing things our way. It may not be the way everyone else does it, but we're doing it anyway." When someone designs an AI routine that follows that advice, then we'll have an Oscar winner. 7



(Top left) Helicopters add a new dimension to the game, especially because you can control them manually. (Bottom left) The viewports at the side of the screen allow you to monitor the action in different parts of the landscape while you take care of business in the main window. (Above right) The alien console is very organic and very slimy. The kids will love it.

In Perspective

If you were to line up *Conquest Earth* and *Red Alert* in a field and tell them to have a fight, *Red Alert* would be the easy victor. It has a more fluid system of controls, more hardware and an altogether 'tougher' image. If you were to line up *Conquest Earth* and *Cannon Fodder* in a field and tell them to have a fight, *Cannon Fodder* would probably come out on top in the end, but it would be a really close fight.

Conquest Earth

Cannon Fodder

Red Alert

Tech Specs

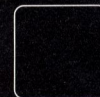
Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P90

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major cards

Controls: Mouse, keyboard



Score

Conquest Earth isn't a bad game, it really isn't. It just doesn't stand out from the crowd.



Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

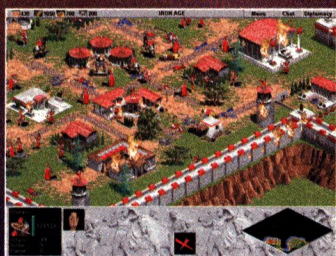
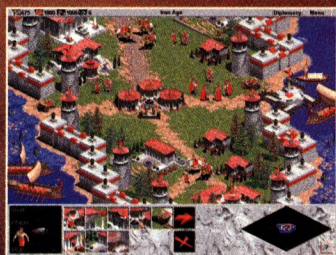
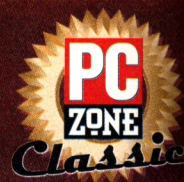
Publisher: EIDOS Interactive

Telephone: 0181 780 2222

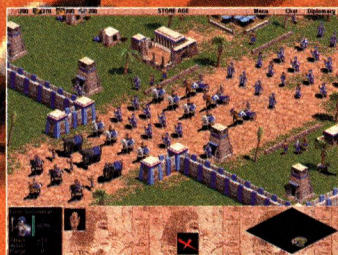
Website: www.eidosinteractive.com

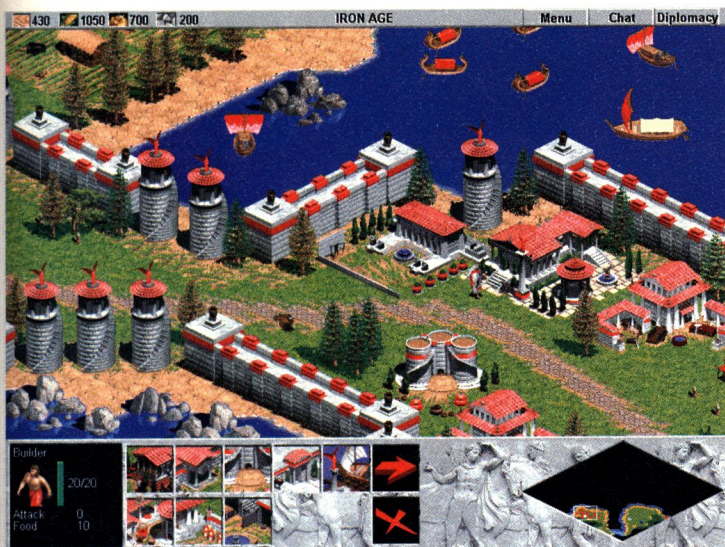
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Personal Computers

Age Of Empires

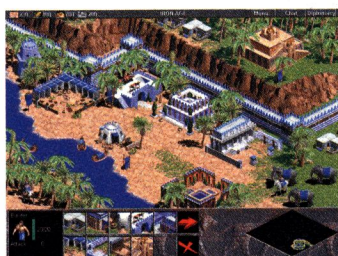


(Above) A typically hectic scene from *Age Of Empires*. Should you repair your burning buildings or go and bash the rotter who attacked them?





(Below) *Age Of Empires* has a rather unique deathmatch mode, in which each participant is given hundreds of units and left to the nasty business of kicking the living shit out of each other. Fantastic.



Chris Anderson finally tore himself away from *XCOM 3* to review *Age Of Empires*, Microsoft's new strategy game. He is now a very confused soul indeed, torn betwixt two absolute gems of strategic excellence. It's a hard life, isn't it.

I'M GOING TO MAKE A STARTLING confession here which won't win me any friends in the strategy gaming community (Oh dear, I don't like the sound of that – Ed.). *Civilization 2* was, to all intents and purposes, basically *Civilization 1* in SVGA. At least it was in my humble opinion. I know a lot of you will disagree strongly with me on this one, and I fully expect to receive tons of hate-mail, but I expected a hell of a lot more from the sequel to one of the finest strategy games of all time.

For instance, there's still hasn't been any effort made to properly animate the soldiers and units in the game. In my opinion, this is totally unacceptable, especially when games such as *Settlers 2* and *Red Alert* have at least attempted to produce units that moved realistically around the screen.

You could probably argue that *Civilization* is more geared towards the strategy side of things, so it doesn't need to be so realistic graphically. Well, that argument may have held up a few years ago, but given the technology available to the *Civ 2* team in 1996 (which was when the game was released), I don't see why we shouldn't expect *Civ 2* to be as impressive graphically as it is in terms of gameplay. As it happens, there are a few people around who seem to agree with me. Enter Ensemble studios with *Age Of Empires*.

Civ revisited

In many respects, *Age Of Empires* is the game I thought *Civilization 2* was going to be. Take a look at the screenshots and try to imagine what these highly detailed sprites look like when they're moving. Take it from me – it looks drop-dead gorgeous. I don't think I've ever seen a strategy game that looked anywhere near this good. In fact, the first time I saw *Empires* I had pretty much convinced myself that any game that looked this hot couldn't possibly deliver the goods in terms of gameplay. This completely negative and irrational reaction was spawned from the fact that as a

games reviewer, I've pretty much more or less come to expect addictive gameplay from games that don't look particularly exciting (*Civ 2* or *XCOM*, for example), or stunning graphics for games that play like shit (hundreds of games from French developers, for example).

Age Of Empires has it all – stunning graphics, meticulous attention to detail and incredibly addictive gameplay. Speaking of gameplay, any of you who are at all familiar with *Civ* or any of the other strategic explore 'em ups will immediately feel at home with *Age Of Empires*.

At the beginning of the game, you choose one of 12 tribes which you'll control throughout the game. Areas you haven't explored appear as black areas on the map (it's the whole

“Age Of Empires has it all – stunning graphics, meticulous attention to detail and incredibly addictive gameplay.”

map at this point). You'll have two or three villagers to carry out your orders and you'll probably want to start the ball rolling by a) building some houses so you can accommodate more units, b) sending one of your men out to gather food, and c) sending the last guy out to explore the surrounding area. So far then, all fairly standard stuff for this type of game, as I'm sure you'll agree.

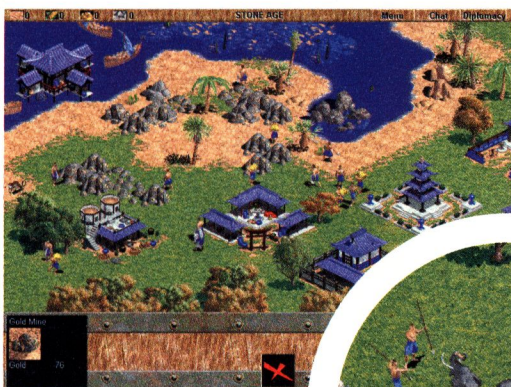
As you progress from here, you'll find yourself wandering

Civilization 3, anyone?

Age Of Empires is more accessible to new gamers than the *Civilization* games. But *Civ 1* and *2* have much more depth than *Empires*. Imagine what could be achieved if the complexity of *Civ* was combined with the friendly interface and gorgeous graphics of *Empires*. Now that would be a strategy game to die for. The race is on then. Can MicroProse come up with the goods for *Civ 3*? Or will Ensemble pip them at the post with *Age Of Empires 2*? Oooh! It's all so exciting, isn't it? (No, not really – Reality Ed.).

Wanna be in my gang?

Build yourself a temple and you'll be able to make a priest. Unlike other games of this type, priests don't wander round the place chucking spells at people – they do far more useful things, such as converting enemy units to your cause. If you're clever, you can 'steal' lots of enemy units this way. Make sure your priest always has a heavily-armed escort though, as they're extremely vulnerable to enemy attack.



(Right) Food is a valuable resource in the game. These elephants will keep you going for quite a while though.

◀ further into well-charted strategy game territory by building a barracks in which to train military units, sending men out to collect gold and ore, sending scouts out to explore as much of the map as possible and building new structures which allow you to upgrade all the stuff you've built in the game so far.

You'll be feeling pretty pleased with yourself at this stage. You'll be very confident. You'll be marvelling at the

gorgeous graphics and looking at all your little men go about their business with a growing sense of pride and a nice, warm tingly feeling inside. Until, that is, you meet the enemy. And when that happens...

Ohhhh shit

When you do run into your computer adversaries, you'll soon discover a few things. For example, you'll find out how technologically advanced your opponents are. Unless you're playing the game at nonce difficulty level, there's a good chance they'll either be as advanced as you are, if not even more so.

Advancements are made over four Ages – Stone, Tool, Bronze and Iron. So if, for instance, you're still on Stone Age, and one or more of your enemies have advanced to Tool Age, you're stuffed. They'll have better weapons. They'll have better units. Their buildings will be more sophisticated than yours and they'll be researching better stuff than you. At this point, you'd better act fast and get to the next age pronto or as soon as you're attacked you'll be history.

And so endeth the first lesson. This is the sort of scenario most of you will encounter the first time you play the game. You'll have to spend a few hours getting to know it before

you'll be able to find the fastest routes to each main advance and what you should be researching first to get to the weapons and buildings that suit your style of play best. But then this is the sort of thing that gets people hooked in the first place. And hooked you will be. I was lucky enough to get an early build of *Empires* before I received the copy under review here, and as a result I've been playing the thing non-stop for about a month. I've got to admit it's refreshing to find a game that's so strong in single-player mode – not that I've got anything against multi-play, you understand, it's just that a lot of

software publishers are using the strength of their multi-player mode as an excuse for the weakness of their games in single-player mode. *Age Of Empires*, needless to say, triumphs in both departments. With the exception of *XCOM 3*, this is the best game I've played in a year and a half. Strategy fans, invest in this game among games. I can guarantee you won't be disappointed. **Z**

Go forth and multi-play

The single-player version of *Age Of Empires* is a fantastic game in itself and is more than enough to justify the asking price, but if you're lucky and have access to a modem or network, you're in for a rather special multi-player experience. You can play against your mates in the obvious way (take your places on the map, build things and then kick the shit out of each other). But there are other, far more interesting ways to multi-play *Age Of Empires*. Co-operative play, for example, is one of the highlights of the multi-player game. Get eight people hooked up to a network, split them into two teams of four, place all the players randomly on the map and hit the Start

button. What then ensues is an absolutely frenzied scramble for food and resources as each team attempts to get to the next technology level before their opponents. Team members can swap resources and summon help from their team-mates if they're being attacked by the enemy. There's also a deathmatch mode in which each player is given shit-loads of units, placed in the battle area and left to slug it out until one of them ceases to exist. Truly then, whether you're playing this game on your own or you've got a modem, or if you've just bought yourself a brand new network for your home (Yeah, right – Ed.), *Empires* has something for everyone.

In Perspective

Although I have to admit to favouring *Age Of Empires* over *Civilization 2*, some of you may prefer the depth and complexity offered by *Civ 2*. Having said that, if you're into strategy games, you'll probably have a whale of a time with both titles. And of course, let's not forget *XCOM 3*, which in my mind still has no equals. But then *XCOM 3* has a very heavy resource management aspect, which you won't get from the other two. We're all spoilt for choice, basically, which can only be a good thing.

Age Of Empires

XCOM 3

Civilization 2

Tech Specs

Memory: 8Mb (16Mb recommended)

Processor: P60 or above

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse



Score

Utterly brilliant.



Price: £34.99

Release date: October

Publisher: Microsoft

Telephone: 0345 002000

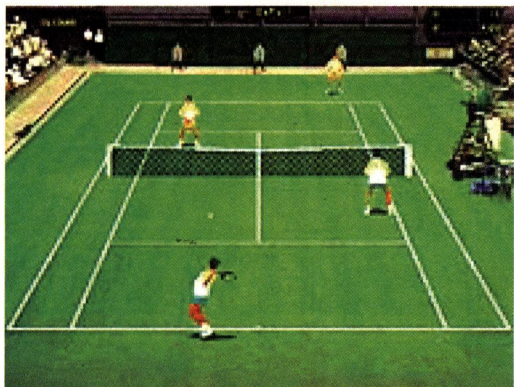
Website: www.microsoft.com

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ARM YOUR FORCES...



Tennis Elbow



Patrick McCarthy got tennis elbow once. He was 11 and he'd been watching Jenny Agutter in *Walkabout*.

7

IT HAPPENS EVERY TIME, DOESN'T IT?

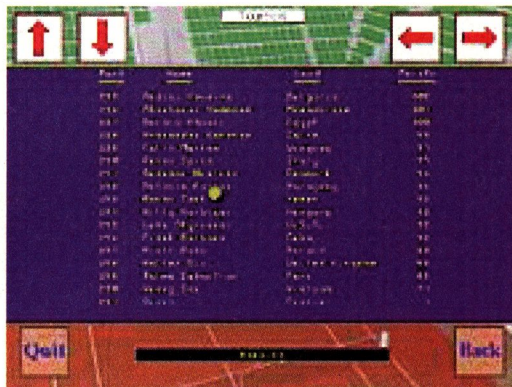
You never get one game in a single genre appearing on its own. Only last month, a tennis game arrived in the office. Now, a few scant days later as I write, another one plops into my lap like a spoonful of gravy in an exclusive restaurant. (Except that, unlike the gravy, it doesn't get my crotch hot.) I'm sure that if a budgerigar-smothering simulation were to arrive next month, there'd be another one a few days later. Call it coincidence, but I'm utterly convinced there's a bit of 'looking over somebody else's shoulder' stuff going on here. Blatant copying – the likes of which should be punished by a steel ruler over the knuckles, as in days of yore. I don't think it's going too far to ask for detentions to be handed out.

Facts time

Anyway, as you've probably surmised, the hilariously-named *Tennis Elbow* is yet another tennis game. Unfortunately, it arrived a little too late. If we'd seen it before last month's review of *Pete Sampras Tennis 97*, we might have been more accepting – purely because there wouldn't have been any decent tennis games around. Now it suffers by comparison.

Accentuate the positive

It has plenty of gameplay options, including tournament or one-off matches, different playing surfaces (although they don't seem to affect the bounce of the ball in any way),



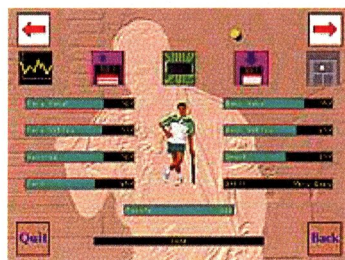
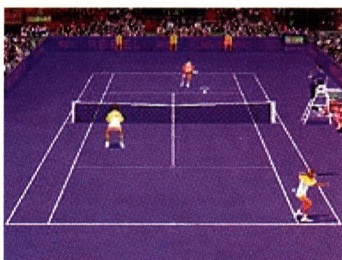
(Left) Whassat – a one-armed player? Cool.
(Above) Do well enough in the tournaments and you move up the rankings.

singles or doubles play, along with the mysterious (but interesting-sounding) 'dirty down' or 'dirty up', with up to four human players where applicable. You can even do a Terry Thomas in *School For Scoundrels* and choose not to change ends between games. The fact that you have to create a player, adding points to his abilities in line with improved performance in tournaments, is also nice. You can change almost everything about them, including the colour of their outfits (thankfully, you must play in predominantly white – there's no Satanic-coloured shirt nonsense here), their skin colour and whether they're right- or left-handed. About the only things you can't select are their sexual orientation and their choice of on-court high energy drink. Oh, and you can't be a woman – but that's all right because women's tennis is shite anyway. (Cue masturbatory letters in praise of Anna Kournikova.)

Control freaks

The main problem is the fact that it's more difficult than it should be to play the thing. For example, the sideways movement is unhelpful, to say the least. You pick up speed and you can't stop or change direction without a delay. This happens whatever controller you use and means you over-run shots and miss what should be easy returns. It also has an idiosyncratic control system comprising direction/button combinations that aren't as intuitive as they might be (Button 2 + Up for slice, and Button 1 + Button 2 + Up for a lob, for example), and a lack of aftertouch.

The sound effects are ludicrously exaggerated, the umpire has clearly borrowed Stephen Hawking's voice synthesiser and... oh, it's all too tedious to go into. Look, just go out and get *Pete Sampras Tennis* instead, alright? **Z**



(Left) I put my court in the wash with my jeans and look what happened. (Middle) Clay: the surface for Spaniards (and bow-legged players generally). (Right) Look at that ponce (©Max Power magazine).

In Perspective

Okay, *Tennis Elbow* is pretty fast, it plays alright and makes for pretty good entertainment in two-player mode, and if it had been released a few months ago then it would no doubt have fared a bit better. But, in case you weren't listening, I'll say it again. IT'S – NOT – AS – GOOD – AS – PETE – SAMPRAS. There. Be told, will you?

Pete Sampras Tennis 97

Tennis Elbow

Housemaid's Knee

Haemorrhoids

Tech Specs

Memory: 8Mb

Processor: DX/266

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, joystick, mouse

Note: Can be played without installation.



Score

It's cheap. And it's alright. But *Pete Sampras Tennis* is more alright.



Price: £19.95

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Goto Informatique

Telephone: 00 33 320 665500

Website: <http://www.goto.fr/>

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PLAN YOUR STRATEGY...



Hardcore 4x4

Hardcore – you know the score. So does **Steve Hill**.
Because he wrote it.



ARDCORE 4X4 MAY SOUND LIKE THE title of one of the specialist videos favoured by news editor Mallo (the man who had a well-thumbed copy of 'Fist Felching Fun' confiscated at

Heathrow Airport. Top tip: don't chew gum at Customs). But it isn't. It's an off-road racing game – and it isn't very good.

The basic premise is as follows: you drive a ludicrously proportioned 'monster truck' round a variety of rugged courses in a vague semblance of a race that incorporates championships, time trials and so forth, furnished with all the multi-player options you could realistically ask for. It even throws in an old-school split-screen mode. Which is all well and good – until you actually start playing it. Although not officially 3D accelerator-only, it might as well be, as it crawls on anything other than a shit-hot machine. Naturally this isn't a problem in the white-hot crucible of technology that is the PC Zone gaming arena, but the average prole should prepare themselves for a struggle.

Even with a 3Dfx card, it's still a cumbersome experience. The tracks are woefully ill-defined, so if you do happen to take the lead, it's an effort to see where you're supposed to be going – the best option is to follow another truck, which



(Above) Witness a real monster mash as the trucks pile up on the rather rugged and rubbish 'tracks'.



pretty much defeats the object of a race. Furthermore, the design of the various courses is wholly unsuitable for vehicles of this type, as whatever fluency there is is hampered by superfluous obstacles that would be more appropriate for competitors in

'Junior Kickstart'. Each race inevitably deteriorates into bouncing stupidly all over the screen, openly flouting the laws of physics and trying not to crash. Okay, so it's difficult and challenging, but then so is nailing your cock to the ceiling. It doesn't necessarily follow that it's something you'd want to do on a regular basis, let alone lay out good money for the privilege.

Half-arsed

The obligatory frills don't really help either. For starters, just take the soundtrack – it threatens a bit of skate-punk, but soon slips into generic rock dirge. The commentary consists of a patronising American spouting unnecessary remarks such as "No mercy!" and "It's getting pretty wild out there!", which rather than adding to the atmosphere serves only to make you want to twist your brain out. Some fairly lame weather effects are thrown in for the sake of it, and there's also the option to race at night, which simply means that the sky goes black and some half-arsed lighting effects are brought into play.

All this could be forgiven if there was a decent race to be had, but there is never any sensation of speed or control, and the whole experience is extremely leaden. Anyway, even if this were a decent simulation, monster trucks are crap. If they have any place in modern society, it's at moronic 'Truckosaurus' shows, the preserve of the middle-American white trash family outing. They have no business on my PC – and I for one do not want this game in my life. **Z**



In Perspective

The only other comparable game is Microsoft's *Monster Truck Madness*, which was okay over a network, but a bit lame in one-player mode. Even the similar *Big Red Racing* had more variety, but *Hardcore 4x4* fails to cut it on both counts.

Hardcore 4x4

Big Red Racing

Monster Truck Madness

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb (32Mb recommended)

Processor: P120 (P166 recommended)

Graphics: SVGA (DirectX 3.0)

Sound: All major sound cards with DirectX 3.0

Controls: Keyboard, joystick, joypad

Note: Despite the high minimum spec, you'll need a 3D accelerator card to get an acceptable frame rate



Score

Monster trucks, but not a monster game.



Price: £tbc

Release date: July

Publisher: Gremlin Interactive

Telephone: 0114 275 3423

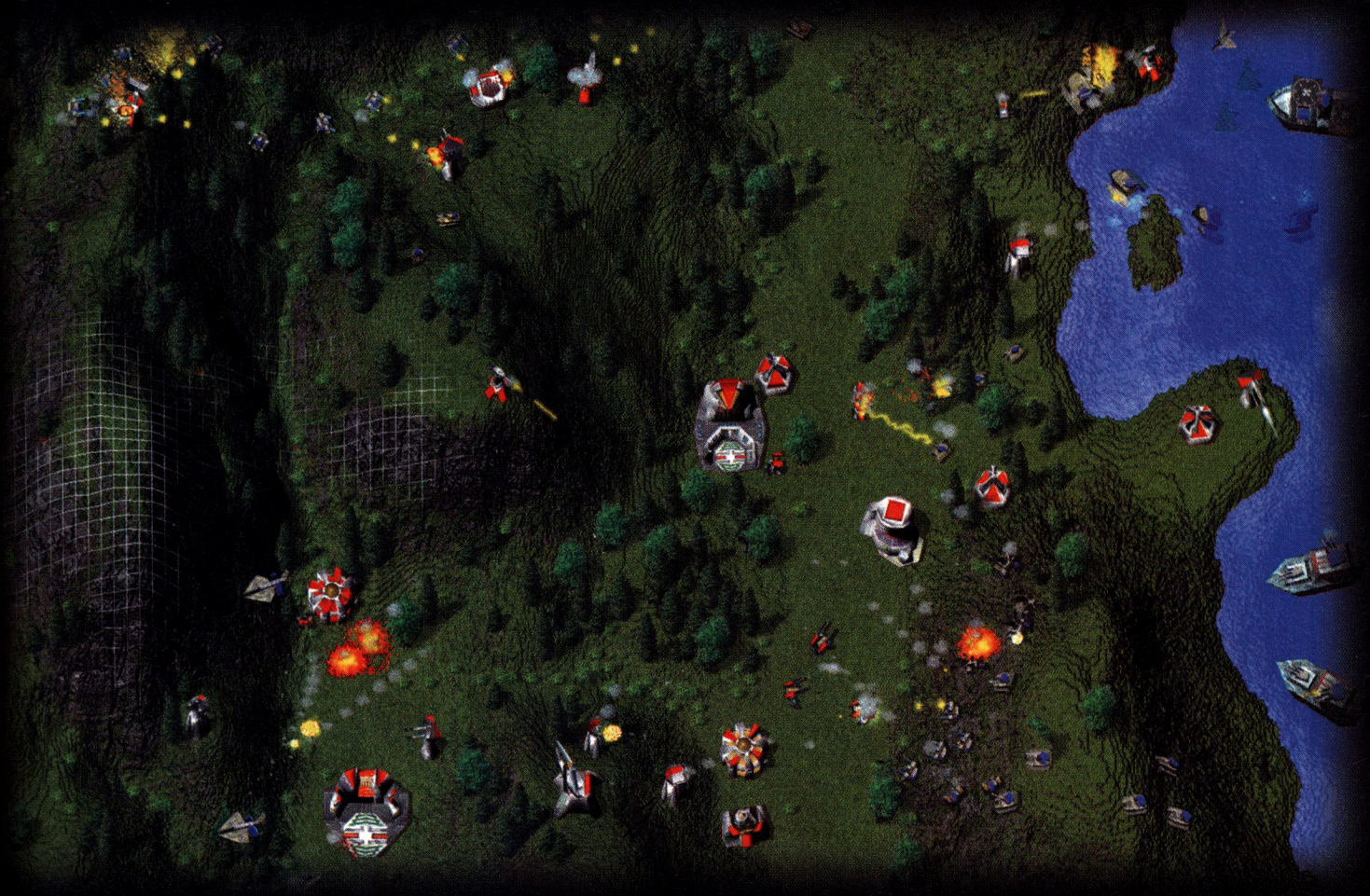
Website: www.gremlin.com

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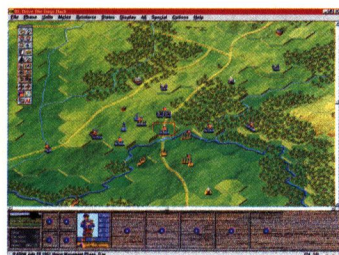
TOTAL ANNIHILATION



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Review ZONE Extra!

Ha! The games here thought they'd escaped our scrutiny, until we dragged them back by their short and curlies. That'll teach 'em.



That's some battlefield, Ma. Y'all be sure them Yankees don't win, now.

BATTLEGROUND 7: BULL RUN

Bull Run is the first game in the Civil War series to feature Internet-play capabilities 'out of the box', although all the titles can be upgraded via the Talonsoft Website. Internet play means you're no longer restricted to running rings round the AI. That's not to say that the AI is crap – for your first few games it will prove a strong challenge – but as you get more experienced, so will your enemy become increasingly predictable.



To hook up over the Net, just start up your dial-up connection and the IP address assigned to you will be displayed. E-mail it to your opponent, who can complete the link. You can also use the communications dialogue to send messages during the battle.

The area around the Bull Run stream saw two bloody battles in the Civil War, both of which are included here. Although they use the same ground, they are quite different affairs. The smaller scenarios are based on the same area though, and don't offer all that much in terms of play.

Bull Run boasts the biggest maps yet and it'll be a little slow on less powerful machines, but the smaller scenarios are equally entertaining, if a little less varied than *Antietam* and *Gettysburg*. However, when you get in close, the graphics are still stunning and the terrain is sufficiently varied to give you scope for trying out different manoeuvres and tactics.

Andrew Wright

Publisher: Empire Interactive
Price: £39.99
Tel: 0181 343 7337

81



GT RACING 97

Following the increasing trend for tribute bands, Ocean appear to have taken the unusual step of releasing a tribute game, as *GT Racing 97* bears a freak resemblance to the classic car 'em up *Screamer*. As shameless plagiarism goes, it's a reasonable starting point and this is still a half-decent game; it might lack some of the subtleties of its 'inspiration', but it does add a few twists of its own.

As an arcade racer, the form is simple. Select one of nine thinly veiled supercars – Porsches, Ferraris and Lamborghinis cunningly disguised with ludicrous names such as The Beast, The Devil and The Stallion – get the wheels in line and go. The courses are themed by their country, hence the Egypt track has you driving through pyramids, England is all rolling downs and red phone boxes, while France is littered with stripy-shirted cyclists chomping on onions (not really).

Pushing and shoving is par for the course, although obviously a 100mph collision with a brick wall results in nothing more grievous than the loss



(Top) *GT Racing 97*: Drive like that on a public highway and you'd deserve to be called a raving maniac.

of a few seconds. As a further hazard, the roads are cluttered with surplus traffic which effectively plays the role of the jam car in *TCR Racing* (Crab quasi-Scalextric toy – Nostalgia Ed.).

GT Racing 97 is instantly playable, and probably instantly forgettable, too. It hardly stretches the boundaries of gaming, but it's worth a look.

Steve Hill

Publisher: Ocean
Price: £24.99
Tel: 0161 832 6633

76

PC Zone recommends

BATTLEGROUND 6: ANTIETAM

The *Battleground* games need little in the way of introduction – they're turn-based wargames with gorgeous 3D graphics and tremendous sound effects. Once you've got used to the slightly odd interface, you'll find yourself in PC wargame heaven.

When *Shiloh* was released, I was hoping to see the remarkable close-up views of *Battleground Waterloo* ported over to the Civil War engine, alongside one or two of the better combat features such as skirmishers. But it wasn't to be – the two new titles, *Antietam* and *Bull Run*, are precious little different to *Gettysburg* or *Shiloh*.

However, *Antietam* slides straight into pole position courtesy of loads of options for the solo gamer. In brief, *Antietam* saw a huge Union army led by a timid commander, McClellan, and a vastly outnumbered Rebel army led by Robert E. Lee. The



full historical scenario is frustrating enough as Union troops are only released piecemeal into the fray. The alternative scenarios offer all kinds of options – try playing the Rebel side against the advancing tidal wave of blue jackets, or the Union side without McClellan's lethargic plan that left half his force in their bivouacs when they could

have won the day. There are also some smaller, more entertaining scenarios based on the bloodbath at Sunken Lane and the fights that took place a few days earlier at the South Mountain passes.

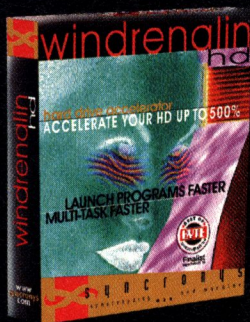
Unlike *Shiloh*, which was one big forest and a few clearings, the map is beautiful with some nice varied terrain. The Antietam Creek has only a few crossing points (a logistical nightmare for Union commanders), but the main battle centres around the roads, the high ground, the patches of woodland and of course, the dreaded cornfield.

The units look as beautiful as ever and the game sounds and video sequences are well executed. If you're looking to try one out, this is the one to go for.

Andrew Wright

Publisher: Empire Interactive
Price: £39.99
Tel: 0181 343 7337

86



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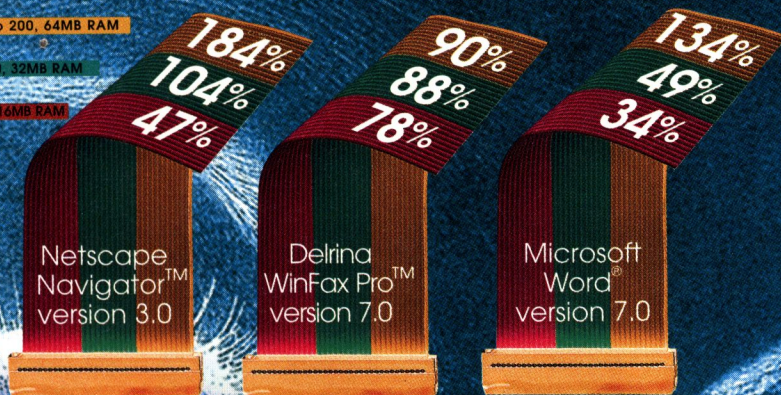


LAUNCH PROGRAMS FASTER

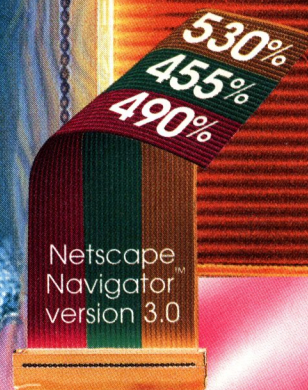
Pentium Pro 200, 64MB RAM

Pentium 150, 32MB RAM

Pentium 75, 16MB RAM



EVEN WHILE MULTI-TASKING

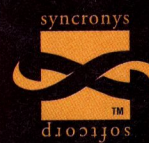


Here are the numbers

And they speak for themselves. PCTest measured how much faster you can launch these applications, even while multi-tasking (four intense, concurrent disk access processes). While results may vary based on your system, applications and nature of multi-tasking, we think you'll be impressed.



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◀ SPACE STATION SIMULATOR

Not one for lispers, the descriptively titled *Space Station Simulator* is more of a 'mul-tie-meeedia experience' than an actual game, though it may be of some interest to prospective astronauts. Supposedly a recreation of the space station that you may or may not know is currently being constructed some 200 miles above your house, you are put in control and invited to either build your own monstrous carbuncle or adapt an existing design. Once in place, you can wander around the station and learn stuff about spacemen, as well as take the occasional spacewalk.

Although undoubtedly an earnest and mildly educational product, it's hardly *It's A Knockout*, and laughs are strictly at a premium. But for the overly keen, it supports an Internet connection that accesses the latest information on the design and construction of the real station. To this end, a free BT Internet disc is included. Which is nice.

Steve Hill

Publisher: Maris Multimedia

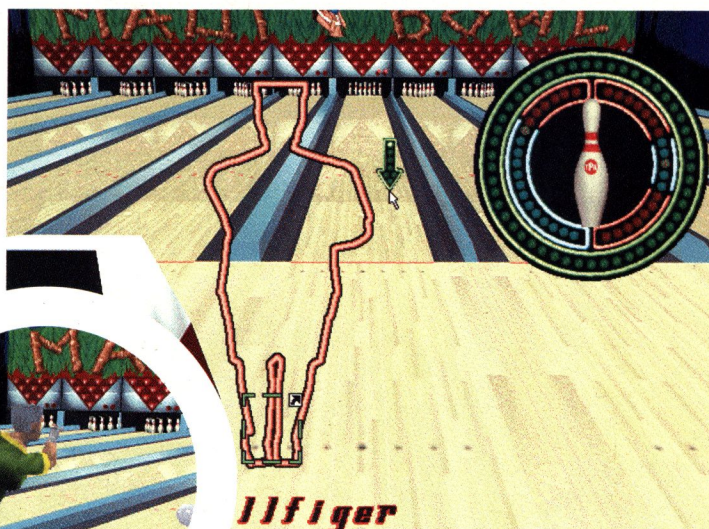
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43



Ladies And Gentlemen, We Are Floating In Space. Please ensure that you have your gravity dial set at the recommended level.



(Above) Strategically position your fat bloke and click the mouse a few times.

(Left) Said fat bloke throws a ball at some sticks. Great.

TEN PIN ALLEY

The highlight of the average trailer park dweller's social schedule, ten pin bowling has a rich and varied history in the US, as demonstrated by the curious inclusion of a short video about Missouri's International Bowling Museum And Hall Of Fame. Naturally, the 'sport' eventually made its way to these shores, where it largely exists to give tedious fat people a secondary purpose for their right arm, as well as furnishing nine-to-five dullards with something to do after work.

Nevertheless, EA have seen fit to bring us *Ten Pin Alley*, recreating all the thrills and spills in the safety of your own PC den. There's an array of bowlers to choose from – including the stereotyped fat bloke – and a variety of leagues and tournaments to compete in, with support for Internet play. The

interface works in much the same way as a golf game: position your bowler and where to launch the ball, followed by three mouse clicks for spin, power and release. Skill is limited to manual dexterity with a mouse button, and the whole thing is marginally less interesting than L!ve TV's bowling spectacular, *Pin Money*. Besides, if you do have a burning desire to play bowls, why not take your buns off to a vulgar entertainment complex instead. They've got booze there and everything.

Steve Hill

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Price: £39.99

Tel: 01753 549442

45

FORMULA KARTS

As titles go, this is unwittingly very self-explanatory. The game involves karts (do try and keep up please), and it's about as formulaic as they come. The formula in question has already



been seen countless times before, but more often than not executed with considerably more expertise and imagination. *Formula Karts* features eight tracks, set in Germany, France, England, Holland, Egypt, Brazil, Japan and Australia, geography fans; although really they could be anywhere thanks to the murkiness of the graphics. There are the standard single race and championship options to be had, as well as an arcade mode with turbo and supergrip boosts and the perennial upgrades shop. Yeah, yeah, yeah, seen it all before, show us something new for a change.

As for the gameplay, the corrective steering is all over the place, and even on a P166 the resolution has to be kept low otherwise it starts jerking like the proverbial inexpensive prostitute. There are also some utterly pointless camera angles thrown in for good measure: pray tell, since when has it been possible to control a vehicle while looking at it head on?

Sega PC have yet to make much of a splash in the suave and sophisticated world of grown-up gaming, and this particular effort

is unlikely to do their reputation any favours. With the PC currently boasting a plethora of quality driving titles, it would be a very unfussy gamer that elected to give *Formula Karts* any more than a cursory glance. And besides, *Superkarts* managed it with far more style, and that was some two and a half years ago. Sega: wake up and smell the coffee.

Steve Hill

Publisher: Sega

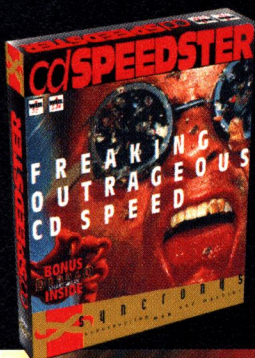
Price: £34.99

Tel: 0181 995 3399

53



(Above) Keep your hands on the wheel, your eyes upon the road. Or do something else. (Left) That'll be Egypt then.



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Budget ZONE

Listen up, skinflints. Here's some good news for those of you with short arms and deep pockets. Those generous funsters at Electronic Arts have only gone and released a range of budget games, labouring under the somewhat presumptuous title of CD-ROM Classics, and all retailing at roughly the price of one of them there music CDs.

Steve Hill sorts the wheat from the chaff.



SPEED HASTE

This was only about 20 quid when it was first released, so by rights you should now be picking it out of your cornflakes of a morning. Even then, you might feel slightly hard done-by, as it is no more than a simplistic arcade racer (an arcade from about 1985, judging by the state of the graphics). On the plus side, *Speed Haste* offers a choice of either Formula One or Stock Car racing. But neither option particularly impresses, and while there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the game, it's simply devoid of anything remotely interesting or original.

Verdict: Bog-standard arcade racer.
Price: £14.99

SYSTEM SHOCK

A classic of its day, the highly-fancied *System Shock* was crowned "King of games" by none other than the organ you currently hold in your hand (no, the other hand). A futuristic first-person explore 'em up, much was made

System Shock is still worth a look. Preferably from a distance.



Speed Haste. Shit name, shit game and hardly deserving of the title Classic. Buy something else.

of its highly involving atmosphere and intriguing plot. The story pits you as saviour of a world where computers have gone mad, borrowing heavily from the likes of 2001's HAL and *Demon Seed's* Proteus. The graphics now look wretched and the convoluted interface is more than a little off-putting, but perseverance is rewarded and this is still a decent turn.

Verdict: Ugly, but rewarding.
Price: £14.99

CRUSADER: NO REMORSE

A bit of an unsung hero, this one, although it recently spawned a sequel, the cunningly-named *Crusader: No Regret*, with rumours that the third episode is to be a bit of a turnaround, currently going under the working title of *Crusader: OK, I'm Sorry*. Explosive isometric action is the order of the day as you don some heavy-duty armour and load up on guns, bombs, grenades and anything else that might hurt, including remote-controlled robots, vehicles and gun turrets. Visible damage results from every round fired, as refineries, laboratories, military bases, offices and even a space station go up in flames.

Verdict: Explosive violence.
Price: £14.99



That'll be the view from atop a Magic Carpet, then. Mind yer backs.

MAGIC CARPET 2

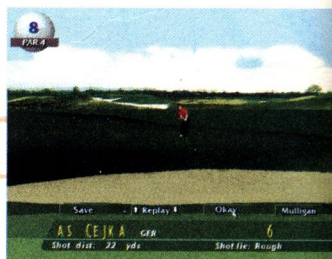
As seasoned campaigners will readily concur, Bullfrog aren't in the business of making bad games. The first *Magic Carpet* caused jaws to drop, and this sequel bettered it. For the uninitiated, the player takes the helm of the titular airborne shagpile and flies around a number of fantasy worlds, battling beasts and demons to collect mana – an all-powerful substance that provides health and the ability to cast spells, of which there are countless varieties. The graphics still look impressive, the music is a haunting little number and it's a genuinely mesmerising experience. At this price, only a moron would ignore it.

Verdict: Inspiral.
Price: £14.99

PGA EUROPEAN TOUR

It's a golf game, as students of the bleedin' obvious will already have worked out. A damned fine one, though, encompassing three courses – England's Wentworth, Gut Kaden in Hamburg and The K Club in Ireland. Tournaments, strokeplay, shootouts and the unfortunately-named skins game are all available, with a flexible database of players. *PGA* goes for the photo-realistic approach – with some success. The lifelike greenery is complemented by digitised golfers, including your Montgomeries and your Olazabals. It's exquisitely detailed, but ultimately it comes down to three clicks of a mouse button and can be as frustrating as the real thing.

Verdict: I don't wear stripy kecks.
Price: £14.99



Get in the hole, questionable knitwear, 19th hole etc...



That's the Crusader in the red Power Rangers suit. Showing No Remorse.

SPACE HULK: VENGEANCE OF THE BLOOD ANGELS

Despite its Games Workshop link, you don't need a beard or greasy hair to play *Space Hulk*. It's a relatively approachable first-person blaster, albeit with a strong strategic slant. You lead a team of Blood Angel space marines through labyrinthine corridors crawling with grotesque Genestealers. Tactics play a large part as you move your squad around the map screen to provide covering fire, seal doors, rescue marines and so forth. There are numerous missions, the combat is extremely bloody and before long the whole place resembles a powercut in an abattoir.

Verdict: Good and bloody.
Price: £14.99

LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE

Certainly deserving of the 'Classic' tag, it was this one that spawned the successful series, impressing almost everyone on its initial release with its groundbreaking graphics and unique gameplay. Developed by the same French nutters who brought us *Alone In The Dark*, it's a surreal journey through a wonderful and frightening world. As the character Twinsen, you have an odd-shaped head but are nevertheless able to wander around the 3D isometric environments in a non-linear fashion, along with some advanced AI to keep the game ticking over. As well as a host of riddles, there's plenty of combat and a whole lotta surprises lurking round every corner.

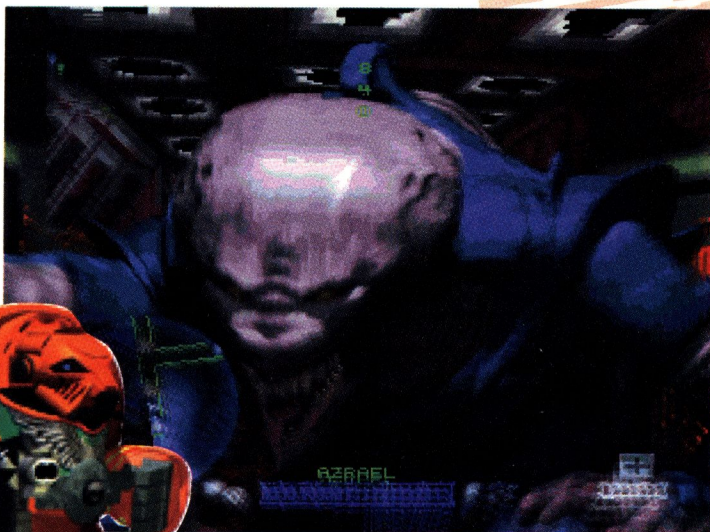
Verdict: Big and hard.
Price: £14.99



LBA. French. Funny-shaped heads. Isometric views. All that business.

STRIKE COMMANDER

Okay, you might think this is just a token flight sim, but *Strike Commander* was nevertheless highly

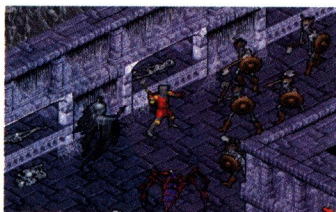


Not something to meet in a dark alley. Or even a light one.

rated at the time of its release, although the graphics do suffer somewhat in comparison to the

latest fare languishing out there on the shelves today. The manual spans less than 100 pages and has been designed in the style of a war magazine, crammed with pretend pilots being interviewed. Once you've ploughed your way through this mighty tome, you can then take charge of Stern's Wildcats, which is an elite squadron of mercenaries. You can then go on to engage rival squadrons and renegade third-world dictators, as well as take part in 20 extra missions. Ready to handle all that?

Verdict: I'm gonna learn how to fly.
Price: £14.99



Oooh! We just can't wait for the ninth installment of *Ultima*!



(Above) Lieutenant Pigeon being killed, in the sky, by an aeroplane. "Tell my wife I'm coming home in a box."
(Right) *Strike Commander* comes with a free map of Europe. That's us in the top left. (We're in Greenland, are we? - Ed.)



ULTIMA VIII

On the world of Pagan, the Guardian's forces are firmly entrenched and his control is absolute. Yes, it's an RPG, so close the curtains, get the cat in and make sure you slip into some comfortable underwear. *Ultima VIII* might have a couple of years on the clock by now, but aficionados of the genre (well, our man Mallo anyway) still rate it highly. With a fixed isometric viewpoint, the graphics are sumptuous and colourful, although they do have a tendency to look a bit 'Ray Harryhausen' on occasions. One of the first RPGs to let you pick up almost everything, *Ultima VIII* includes the trademark magic mushrooms, where the screen goes all 'trippy' (how we laughed, and oh, the flashbacks). A massive and difficult game.

Verdict: Goblins for gimps.
Price: £14.99

COMANCHE 2.0

Another hefty manual, another airborne killing machine – albeit this time of the spinning blade variety. Modelled on the US RAH-66 Comanche attack helicopter, *Comanche 2.0* puts you at the helm of a lethal piece of hardware and invites you to embark on some 60 combat missions, although they are fairly simplistic compared with the likes of *Apache Longbow*. Despite claims about Voxel Space Technology (whatever the hell that is), the

graphics are still a little blocky when you get up close and are best viewed from afar. If whirlybird choppers are your thing though, this is still a reasonable game – especially if your wallet turns pale at the thought of *Comanche 3.0*.

Verdict: Big choppers.
Price: £14.99



Comanche 2.0. It's got helicopters and everything.

FROM THE CREATORS OF



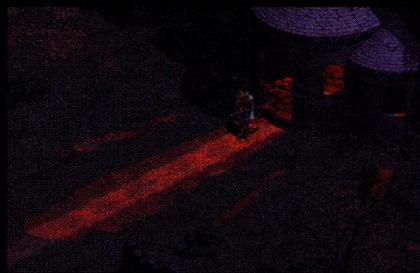
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Tech ZONE

DVD: The next big thing?

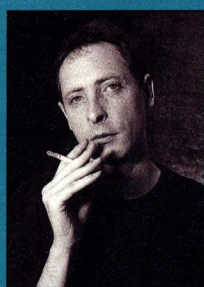
DVD is being hailed as the new storage format of choice by 'those in the know'. Several big-league hardware manufacturers are already preparing to jump on the bandwagon with DVD-ROM drives of their own. It would appear to be high time then that we take a look at the technology which is threatening to revive the dreaded FMV adventures we all know and hate.

FIRST THINGS FIRST:

what exactly is DVD? Well, when DVD was first announced, ignorant industry know-it-alls (like myself) immediately assumed the acronym stood for 'digital video disc'. Wrong – it means digital versatile disc.

The 'versatile' part of it apparently refers to the fact that the technology can be used to power a home entertainment video system as well as to replace existing PC CD-ROM technology.

DVDs can allegedly hold a massive 4.38Gb of data. I say 'allegedly' because nobody seems to be able to agree on an exact capacity, but rest assured that it'll be bloody huge. What this all means to you and I is that our games are going to get bigger. Developers are bound to jump at the chance to stick loads of FMV footage in their games, forcing us to sit through hours of bloody movie sequences before getting to the actual gameplay.



Then again, maybe they'll opt to put their *entire* games on one DVD instead of releasing them in phases (mission packs, add-on disks etc) and save us all lots of money.

It's still too early to tell what sort of games we'll be

Spycraft is the first game to take advantage of DVD.

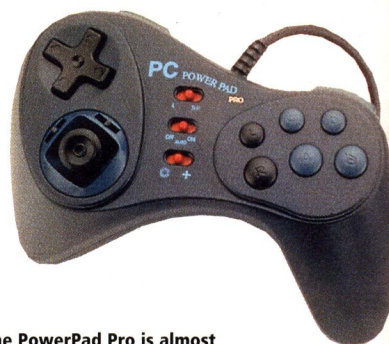
seeing on DVD, but Activision's *Spycraft* will be one of the first arrivals, and rumour has it that Virgin's forthcoming *Blade Runner* will be released on DVD too. I'll keep you posted on any startling developments relating to DVD games, so if you want to keep up with the PC gaming Joneses, you know where to come.

PC PowerPad Pro



ET'S FACE IT – GAMEPADS AREN'T THE most exciting subject in the whole world, but we've managed to find one that genuinely deserves your attention. It's modelled on the Nintendo 64 gamepad, which is being hailed as revolutionary in every console magazine in the country.

If you're wondering why, take a look at the photo of the PowerPad Pro and pay particular attention to that little stick protruding from the left-hand side of the pad. It's absolutely perfect for things like footie games and platformers, and it's also very quick and responsive. We love it – and we think you will too. The PowerPad Pro costs £24.99. For more details contact Bastion on 0171 490 1323.



The PowerPad Pro is almost identical to the acclaimed N64 pad.

Maxi DVD

NOW THAT'S SPOOKY, THAT IS. THERE I WAS HARPING on in my column about DVD and guess what shows up in the office? That's right, a brand new DVD-ROM drive from Maxi. It comes in at a fairly reasonable £335 plus VAT (well, reasonable compared to how expensive CD-ROM drives were when they first appeared), and it doubles up as a 24-speed CD-ROM drive too. The only problem is I haven't got time to test it as we're just about to go to press. Oh, and there aren't any games out for it yet either, but be sure to check out next month's *Tech Zone* for an in-depth report of the machine, hopefully in conjunction with a review of Activision's *Spycraft* on DVD. For more details contact Memsolve on 0345 413654.



PC Dash

ARE YOU TIRED OF LEARNING MULTIPLE KEY commands to play your favourite flight sim or big robot game? Do you get pissed off at having to plough through manuals to find out what each key does when 'Alt' or 'Control' is pressed? You'll be wanting PC Dash then.

This new PC accessory plugs into your keyboard port and comes with data sheets packed with all the commands you need for your fave games. Publishers are already queueing up to support it for their games (well, maybe not queueing up, but they're pretty keen). The PC Dash costs £49.99. For more info call 0171 278 0050.



Dan Home Plus P200MMX



EVERY TIME A NEW GAME IS REVIEWED, BOASTING EVEN BETTER graphics and more realism and all that guff, those of us with lesser PCs instantly think things like: "Yes, but it'll be jerky as a bastard on my machine." And we'd be right. The bottom line is that if your PC's not up to scratch, most of the best games will look pretty poor.

Dan have been making PCs for ages now, and they've come up with a system designed specifically for games. The single most important component in any PC is obviously the CPU, and the Dan comes with an Intel P200MMX processor, which is fast enough for most tasks.

MMX is pretty much obligatory these days, and while there

aren't that many games optimised for it (and even those that are optimised don't run much better), the extra on-board cache on MMX chips usually adds around a ten per cent performance boost to all software.

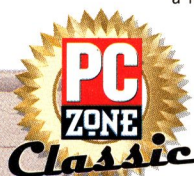
There are plenty of companies out there who can cobble together a PC with a fast CPU, but it's the standard of the rest of the components that makes a system really stand out. In this respect, the Dan doesn't disappoint, and the CPU is mounted on a fast HX motherboard with 512K cache. There's 32Mb of RAM as well, which is a definite plus in these days of memory-hungry games.

The graphics are taken care of by a Matrox Mystique. This is a superb 2D card, with good 3D thrown in. While it's not up to the standard of a 3Dfx card, the Mystique will certainly make a difference to Direct3D games.

The Dan also has a fast 2.5Gb Seagate hard disk to keep all those games on, and a 24-speed CD-ROM drive for those bits of games that stay on the CD. Finally, there's a 33.6 modem and an AWE64 sound card.

Overall, this is a well-specified PC. The components used are some of the best around, and if you're looking for a PC that'll enable you to play the poshest games and make your mates jealous, the Dan'll do nicely.

Dave Mathieson



Manufacturer: Dan Technology
Price: £1,565
Tel: 0181 830 1100
Website: www.dan.co.uk



The Dan Home Plus comes with everything you'll need to get even the most demanding of games up and running straight away.

Labtec Gaming Headset/ Boom Mic C-730

PLAYING RED ALERT OVER THE PHONE IS FUN, BUT CELEBRATING A MOMENTOUS VICTORY, grasped by a plan executed with the finest subtlety, is not nearly rewarding enough. You want to express how excellent you are, and at the same time what an unworthy opponent your friend is. And now you can.

The Labtec Gaming Headset allows greater animosity than was previously possible by letting you hurl verbal abuse at your victim or the cheating git who just won. The headset plugs into your sound card and modem, although the modem will need to have DSVD (digital simultaneous voice and data) capabilities. This allows you to talk over the same line that a game is taking place on, affording much opportunity to put your rival off or to help co-ordinate co-operative manoeuvres in EF2000.

The headset uses N-DAT technology, which cuts down the amount of noise from outside. The cable has a volume control and mono/stereo switch for easy access, and the headset is adjustable. Hi-fi buffs will be interested to know that it also has a 40mm dynamic mylar diaphragm driver, which sounds alright.

Available from Labtec on 01252 629900, the C-730 costs £99.99. DSVD modems are available from Hayes and all good modem manufacturers.

Simon Edwards



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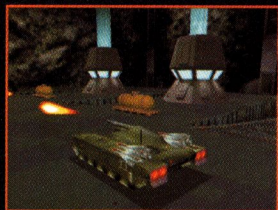
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PIPEX

DIAL 90



Dialing...



Connecting...



Connected



Disconnecting...



Disconnected

ZONE

On-Line

Grrr! power

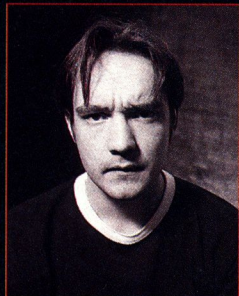
This month in *On-Line*: Even the great Romero gets thrashed by the fairer sex at *Quake*, off into orbit with the rather fab *Planetary Raiders*, and the launch of *PC Zone*'s free multi-player game server.

CHRIST. YOU THINK I PLAY *QUAKE* A LOT. HOW MUCH though? Perhaps an hour every couple of days (providing I can squeeze it into my debauched social schedule)? No, a four-hour stretch is my theoretical maximum – anything more and blood vessels start popping in my eyes and a strange foam collects at the side of my mouth.

I recently visited the Ion Storm offices in Dallas, home of ubermeister John Romero and his squadron of arch-deathmatch experts. Although deathmatch is prohibited before 6pm, these boys will think nothing of playing straight for 12 hours. *Twelve* freaking hours.

They were good, but not as good as a young waif called Cornelia who dropped in. Poo-poo female *Quake* players at your peril – Cornelia cut through the Ion Storm ninjas like a hot knife through butter. She pummelled Romero 20 to -1. She smacked down another office *Quake*lord 20-02, and then proceeded to murder the top guy in the office, Noel 'Shadow' Stevens, 20-10. She never missed. Never made a mistake. Her favourite tactic was to fire a rocket at her opponent's feet and then pluck them out of the air with a lightning gun.

Using my supreme skills however, I managed to wriggle out of a game with her. "Oh, is that the time – I gotta watch *Melrose Place*," but secretly rebuilt my battered ego with a few turns on *QuakeWorld* using Ion Storm's T1 connection. Oh, the joy and the pleasure of 33ms ping. For me it was like playing on a LAN. For



them it was like playing in glue. But they were Americans, so they deserved everything they got.

David
McCandless



FROM THE FRONT



Fer de Lance. Anaconda. Thargoid. Words to send shivers down the spine of anyone who flunked exams through playing too much *Elite*. Jamie Cunningham gets to grips with *Planetary Raiders* and finds himself down memory lane, whistling the *Blue Danube* and reliving the nightmare that was his History O-level.



A FAR TIME AGO, IN A GALAXY long, long away, the inhabitants of a planet called Osis were utterly fed up. Governments had made a determined hash of things, corporations had depleted the planet of its natural resources, and something called Scrappy had just shown up on the *Scooby Doo Show*. Society was on the brink of collapse.

As luck would have it, a visitor from another system appeared with all the necessary bits and pieces to get the Osisians off their loathsome homeworld and out into space. Calling himself the 'Starman', the alien Samaritan supplied advanced technology to corporations at discount

prices, asking for just one thing in return – an option to purchase the resources his technology made available.

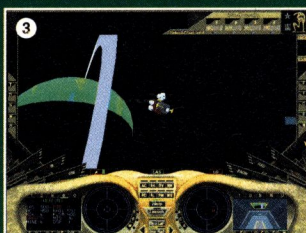
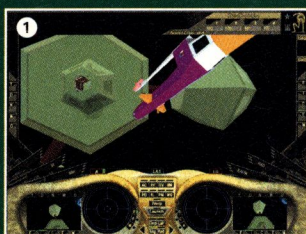
And lo, the object of *Planetary Raiders* – to be a member of the corporation which sells the most resources to the Starman.

Ooh, is it like *Elite*?

You start off on an Osis space station as a corporation member, complete with a ship, supplies and a salary. That doesn't mean you're instantly tied down to a career – you're free to leave the corporation, join another or simply fly about – become a cosmic buccaneer, escort other ships, set up a taxi firm, whatever takes

OUTSIDE! NOW!

Most players are friendly and keen to help out, but some are there for combat only (the extraterrestrial equivalent of BMW drivers), and some are sadists who hang around outside space stations waiting to make a twat out of hapless space virgins.



Clockwise from top right: [1] Hey – arsehole! Yes, YOU! I was trying to dock! Get out of the damn way with that stupid girly craft of yours! [2] So THAT'S the way you want to play it, eh? Eat laser, no-brain! [3] Mwuhaha! Yellow chicken! Running away like a total spasm! [4] I don't give a rubber duck if your mate Tuskin has a dreadnought. (What's a dreadnought?) [5] BUT HE STARTED IT! Ow ow ow, etc.

Product details

Game: Planetary Raiders
Version: 0.8x Beta
Publisher: iMagic Online
Max no of players: 10,000 at launch
Server: US
Price: Etc
Website: www.imagicgames.com

simple and effective, but it's let down by the way it scatters itself incongruously across your Windows desktop. If I'm going to be "plunged into the experience" like the blurb says, I don't really want to be able to see the bottom half of my Kournikova wallpaper while I'm smuggling hard drugs through the green channel at Osis space port. Most distracting.

A few other minor gripes make themselves apparent at this stage too. Most importantly, if your dial-up connection is set to auto disconnect after a period of inactivity, make sure you remember to disable it. *Planetary Raiders* seems to bypass the usual TCP/IP routes and Windows will helpfully drop the line in the middle of a game, thinking you've gone off to sit in the garden to be at one with nature.

But is it like Elite?

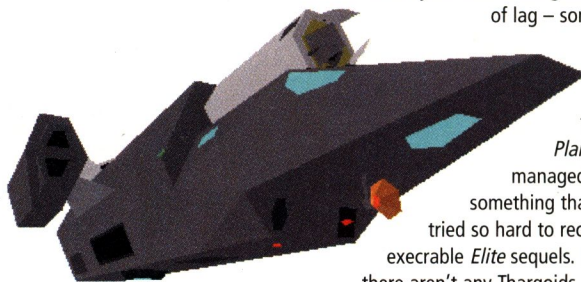
The flight mode has that special *je ne sais quoi* of the Bell & Braben mould-breaker, but where the tape-based wireframe classic was crammed into 32K of RAM, iMagic Online's latest MEGApayer offering chomps 14Mb of your hard drive, supports 1024x768 Direct3D, and will allow voice connections and up to 10,000 people on-line at its September launch.

And flight mode is where the game really gets going. My initial fear that the universe would be nothing but an empty void, with the phone bill arriving in orbit before I did, was unfounded. While I could never pretend that the game is bustling (it's still in beta, after all), there are enough folks doing their own thing to fulfil my video game dream – to fly around in an *Elite*-like universe full of real people.

The graphics are uncomplicated but never simplistic and, crucially for an on-line game, there is absolutely no evidence of lag – something the iMagic team worked

hard to achieve. It runs as if it's been varnished with lard and there's not even a hint of the dreaded lurch.

Planetary Raiders has managed to find the certain something that David Braben tried so hard to recapture with his execrable *Elite* sequels. It's just a pity there aren't any Thargoids...



Drag and drop into your cargo hold.

PROS

Elite fiends will go into raptures

CONS

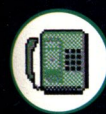
Windows 95 front-end a bit on the poor side



Look mum, I'm in orbit!

Multiplayer Zone

Resident Zone webslinger **Paul Mallinson** invites you to experience our brand new multi-player gaming service.



It's here and it refuses to be ignored – Multiplayer Zone, PC Zone's FREE on-line multi-player gaming service – launched to much acclaim at www.pczone.co.uk on 1 August.

This brand new system allows unlimited free access to PC Zone's very own QuakeWorld and dedicated Quake servers.

On top of this, gamers also get the chance to meet head-to-head in over 30 other multi-player games by way of our super-fast Kali games server.

It's state-of-the-art, it's completely free – and it's up and running now.

How do I join this on-line mayhem?

It's so dead easy you can't fail. First off, you'll need a modem or some other form of connection. Then you'll need to point your Web browser at www.pczone.co.uk and head for the Multiplayer Zone pages. From there on in, all you have to do is follow the on-screen prompts. Here's an overview of what you can expect to encounter...



QUAKE-U-LIKE

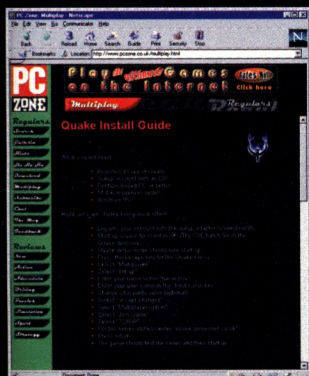
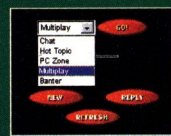
Multiplayer Zone will surely become the proving ground of future Quake champions – keep 'em peeled for competitions, tournaments and international matches in the near future. Check the site every day for updates.



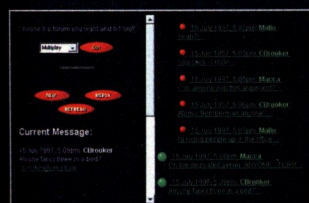
TALK TO US

Also, due to popular demand, we've expanded our on-line Chat Forum service – with the introduction of the Banter forum (for more of the usual idle chat), the Multiplayer Zone forum (so's we can offer each other out at Quake and stuff), and a new and improved Hot Topic forum.

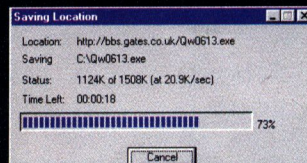
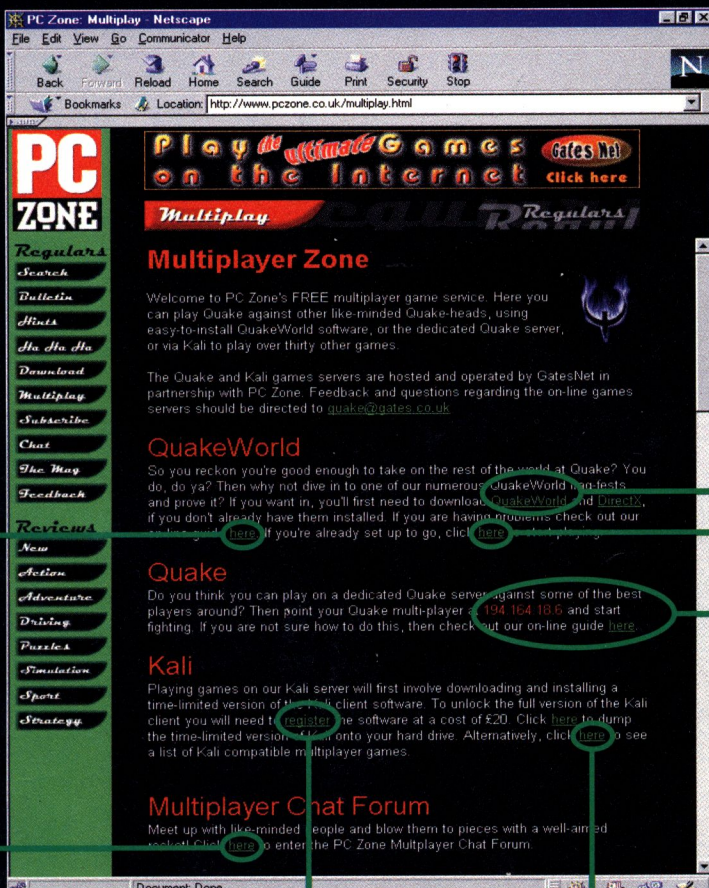
It's all happening at PC Zone On-line – so get yourself connected before you miss out on all the fun!



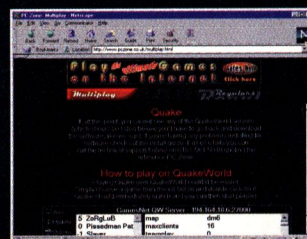
It's not that difficult to work out what you're supposed to be doing in here, but for those of you who need a helping hand, step-by-step instructions are provided.



You may want to arrange a game at a specific time, or invite pals to play in a certain game. The Multiplayer Zone chat forum is the best place for just such a pursuit.



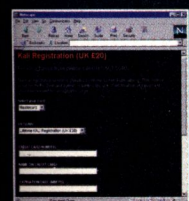
Download QuakeWorld and install it onto your system. Make sure you also install the QuakeWorld browser plug-in which comes supplied with the software.



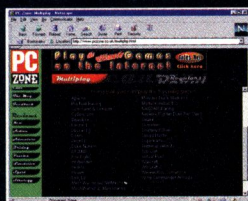
You're in! Scroll down the page and choose a game from those available. Next, double-click on the game of your choice and load up on weaponry.



Our dedicated Quake server runs faster than QuakeWorld, and plays host to some of the best players in the country. Set-up is done from within Quake – see our on-line guide for full details.



The Kali client software is free to download and use, but it is time-limited and the full version must be registered if you wish to continue using it. You can register with minimum fuss via our very own site for a mere £20.



Using revolutionary Kali software, almost any multi-player game with TCP/IP network code can be played over the wire. A list of supported software can be accessed from the Website and will be updated on a regular basis.

On-Line News & Gossip

The page with its finger on the pulse of on-line gaming

On-line games hit big time

ACCORDING TO A RECENT STUDY BY DFC Intelligence, the on-line games market will grow to be worth a cool \$1.2 billion by the year 2001. To put things in perspective, that's the equivalent of buying a *PC Zone* subscription for everyone in Scandinavia.

The DFC study, released at last month's E³ show in Atlanta, separates on-line activity into two areas – PC games and console games – with the former set to account for most of the revenue. More sophisticated games will soon

be made available to a wider audience, it claims, although a similar report from IDC suggested that over half of all Internet users never play on-line games, mostly because they are discouraged by speed and bandwidth issues.

Such research rarely ever refers to European users being disinclined to stay on-line because of monster phone bills, but in a panel discussion at E³, David Cole, founder and president of DFC, admitted that the worldwide popularity of on-line games "could still be a long way off".

Red Storm and IBM team to develop Net gaming

RED STORM, TOM CLANCY'S DABBLE IN THE ON-LINE PUBLISHING ARENA, HAVE TEAMED up with Big Blue to help mature a new Java-based games environment. The new IBM technology, codenamed Inverse, has been designed to remove the inherent difficulties of networking in cyberspace and give greater freedom to developers and players alike.

Politika, Clancy's upcoming action game, will support thousands of users at a time and up to eight users in each session, all thanks to Inverse's clever use of load balancing to optimise bandwidth, clustering for fault tolerance and polarised reticulation with climacteric hypersacks. Or something like that.

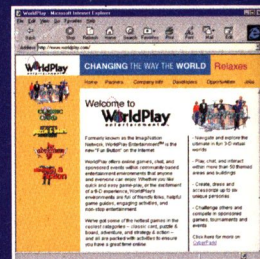
Clancy fans can find out more at <http://www.redstorm.com>.

AOL hoping for WorldPlay domination

"DID YOU KNOW," ASKS Ted Leonis of AOL Studios, "that there were more people on AOL last night between 9pm and 10pm than there were watching Larry King?" AOL's long-term goal is to attract all television viewers to their on-line service – a rather unlikely objective for an outfit based in the country that invented couch potatoism.

Ted points out that his swelling arsenal of attractions includes WorldPlay, a gaming service due out of beta soon, where participants can choose their appearance and then sit down for a heady mix of backgammon, bridge, hearts and cribbage. It's touted as part of AOL's new "social environment", which is marketing speak for "this costs money" – \$1.99 an hour, to be precise.

WorldPlay is at <http://www.worldplay.com>.



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20 LIGHT SOURCED BATTLE ARENAS WITH
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A trip to Futuroscope!

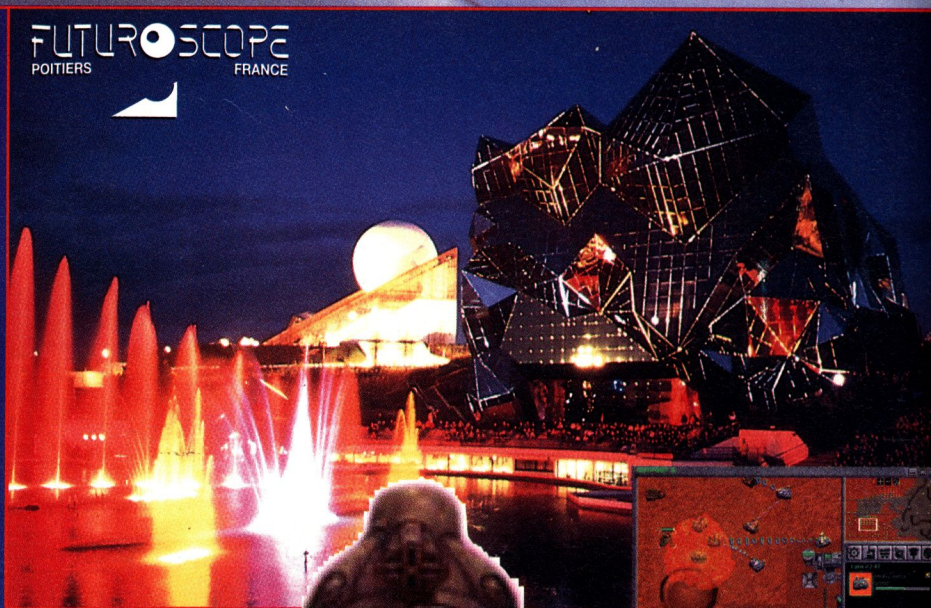


Sierra are celebrating the imminent release of their futuristic strategy game *Outpost 2* by giving away an all-expenses paid, two-day trip to Futuroscope – a theme park with a difference.

Futuroscope is situated just outside Poitiers in France and is home to some of the most amazing sights and shows on earth. Giant 3D cinemas, futuristic sculptures and much more await the two lucky winners of our first prize. The trip includes the flight to and from France, hotel accommodation and two full days at Futuroscope. The first prize winners will each receive a copy of *Outpost 2*, and we also have six more copies of the game to give away to six lucky runners-up.

All you need to do to enter the competition is to answer the three questions below, send the answers to the address supplied by the end of September, and wait to see if your name is pulled out of the bag when we get round to choosing the winners.

FUTUROSCOPE
POITIERS FRANCE



Questions:

1. *Outpost 2* is the sequel to which best-selling strategy game?

- ☐ Goalpost ☐ Outpost ☐ Signpost

2. Which of these is not an anagram of *Outpost 2*?

- ☐ Outspot 2 ☐ Stopout 2 ☐ Stopall spots

3. What type of game is *Outpost 2*?

- ☐ A challenging and addictive space strategy game
☐ An interactive movie
☐ A state-of-the-art football sim

Name:

Job title:

Company name:

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime telephone number:

☐ Please tick if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.

☐ Tick if under 18 years of age.

Terms and conditions: All usual restrictions apply. For a copy of the rules please write to PC Zone at the usual address.

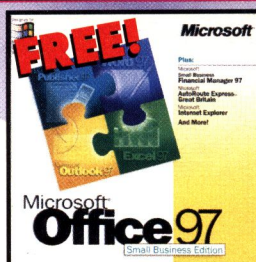
Send your entries to: PC Zone/Sierra Compo CPCZ79B, Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ, United Kingdom. Closing date for entries is 30 September 1997.

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NG - A Final Unity, Destruction Derby 2 (+enhanced 3D),
Mechwarrior 2 (+enhanced 3D), Scorched Planet
(+enhanced 3D), Sensible World of Soccer, Settlers 2,
Archimedean Dynasty, Transport Tycoon Deluxe,
Railroad Tycoon Deluxe, UFO Enemy Unknown, Gods,
Magic Pockets, Speedball 2, Xenon 2, Cadaver, Lotus 3,
Zool 2, Premier Manager 2, Space Crusade, Gunship,
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SOFTWARE (supplied on CD)

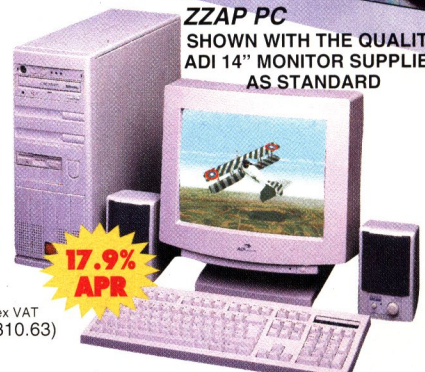
Microsoft Works V3, Microsoft Encarta 96, Microsoft
Publisher, Microsoft Design Pack for Publisher,
Microsoft Cinemania, Microsoft Dangerous Creatures,
Microsoft Musical Instruments, Microsoft Ancient
Lands, Microsoft Bookshelf, Microsoft Scenes, Matrox
MPEG Video Software Suite and Creative Labs
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Championship Manager 2, Microsoft Golf, Destruction
Derby 2 (+enhanced 3D), Mechwarrior 2 (+enhanced
3D), Scorched Planet (+enhanced 3D), Settlers 2,
Archimedean Dynasty, Transport Tycoon Deluxe,
Railroad Tycoon Deluxe, UFO Enemy Unknown,
Gods, Magic Pockets, Speedball 2, Xenon 2,
Cadaver, Lotus 3, Zool 2, Premier Manager 2, Space
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Service 2, Team Yankee, Championship Manager '93,
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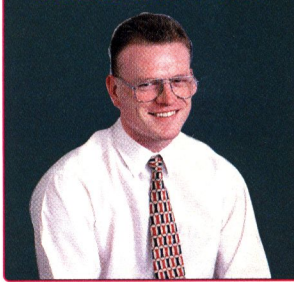
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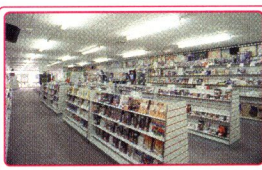
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WARHAMMER 2: DARK

THE ORIGINAL WARHAMMER GAME WAS BIT OF A DISAPPOINTMENT. CHARLIE BROOKER ASKS THOSE IN THE KNOW WHY THE SEQUEL WILL BE SO MUCH BETTER.

T

HINK ORCS. THINK DWARVES. THINK skeletal warriors and spell-slinging mages. Now think war. Think unending conflict.

Think corpse-strewn battlefields and tactical manoeuvring. Then weave both of these thoughts together in your head and you've more or less tagged the world of WarHammer.

WarHammer is, as you're doubtless aware, a wildly successful strategy game from tabletop gurus Games Workshop. It inspires rabid devotion in its followers, many of whom would doubtless lay down their own lives to protect a particularly cherished troop. Players collect and paint entire armies of intricately detailed figurines, and then lead them into battle against each other using – to the outsider at least – a bewilderingly comprehensive set of rules and dice throws to decide the outcome.

Like Space Hulk before it, a computer game translation seemed like a damn good idea. And so it was that early last year, Mindscape released WarHammer: Shadow Of The Horned Rat to a lukewarm reception from the critics. Many appreciated what the game was trying to do, but found certain aspects lacking. Our very own Godfather, Tim Ponting, commented in the April '96 issue of PC Zone that although "the concept is brilliant – a real-time strategy game that's challenging, with an interesting setting and a strong plot," there was no getting away from the fact that "the game has driven me mad over the past week. I hate it. I love it. I hate it. I've snapped the CD in half. And now I'm going to jump off a bridge, because I just can't play it any more".

The problem? An unwieldy interface, an incredibly high difficulty setting and an abundance of 'random events' – such as backfiring cannons that wipe out half your units – which are all very well in a tactile tabletop game of

IT'S MY PARTICLE AND I'LL DIE IF I WANT TO

SOME OF THE PRETTIEST VISUAL EFFECTS ON DISPLAY IN WARHAMMER II: DARK OMEN owe their existence to the game's advanced particle system. Like, huh? What in the name of Bernard Matthews is a particle system? What's *that* supposed to look like?

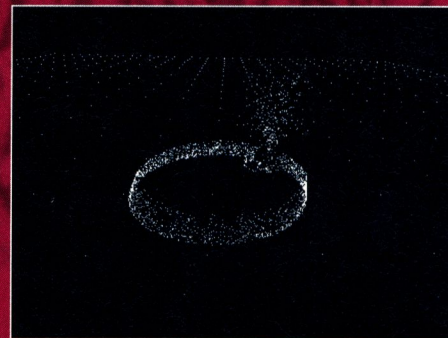
Relax. You've doubtless seen a bit of hot particle action shining out of your monitor before – perhaps without even recognising it as such. You know those arcing trails of blood that momentarily festoon the air around you each time a particularly satisfying bit of gibbage takes place in a game of *Quake*? Them's be partides, zur. Albeit relatively primitive ones. Ever wondered how graphic artists manage to recreate such incorporeal elements as fire and smoke using 3D rendering software? Them's be partides too, zur.

So how does it work? Well, it's quite simple, really – it's just hundreds and hundreds of tiny dots, each of them moving independently of the rest, yet each within the confines of a particular set of rules. Each dot equals one pixel. And the more dots you have, the more convincing the effect. If you also make them change colour now and again, even better still. The end result is fluid, convincing and surprisingly versatile.

Dark Omen uses a sophisticated routine to successfully recreate an array of startling effects, from exploding heads to burning corpses, from shimmering forcefields to shoals of fish milling about in ponds. Whether they'll implement our suggestion – that they create a routine that accurately mimics a stream of urine, affording players the opportunity to literally piss all over the corpses of their victims – is anyone's guess. They really could if they wanted to.

And, to briefly resurrect the unwelcome spectre of alleged comedian Jimmy Cricket, there's more. Partides can be made to obey the laws of physics. Yawn, yeah, so what? Well, it's also possible to attach objects to a particle. Like, so? Well, it means that if, for instance, you fire a bloody great projectile weapon into a marauding pack of zombies, they'll be tossed through the air like broken dolls by the inevitable explosion. And if there's, say, a tree or a house nearby, some of the bodies will ricochet off it before falling back to earth. And if it all takes place on the top of a hill, even better – they'll tumble down it, à la that infamous accident-prone water-gathering duo of legend – Jack and Jill. Just try recreating *that* shit with your opponent's figurines in the middle of a tabletop game and you'll soon be going home with a dodecahedral dice lodged firmly up your brown balloon knot. Which is possibly the only uncomfortable accident that hasn't yet already made an appearance in *Casualty*.

The bloke to thank for all these dotty shenanigans is Jon Taylor, a man who spends the bulk of his working day staring at a whirlwind of pixels sweeping across his monitor like a swarm of well-trained bees. Apparently, he sees partides in his dreams. So when you are cooing over the game's special effects, spare a thought for him. He'll probably be tossing and turning in bed at the mercy of a nightmarish army of malevolent specks. Ewwwwww.





O MEN

THEY STRETCH HORSES, DON'T THEY?

WHEN IT CAME TO TRANSLATING the famous Games Workshop figurines into on-screen sprites, the team had not alternative but to use a little artistic licence.

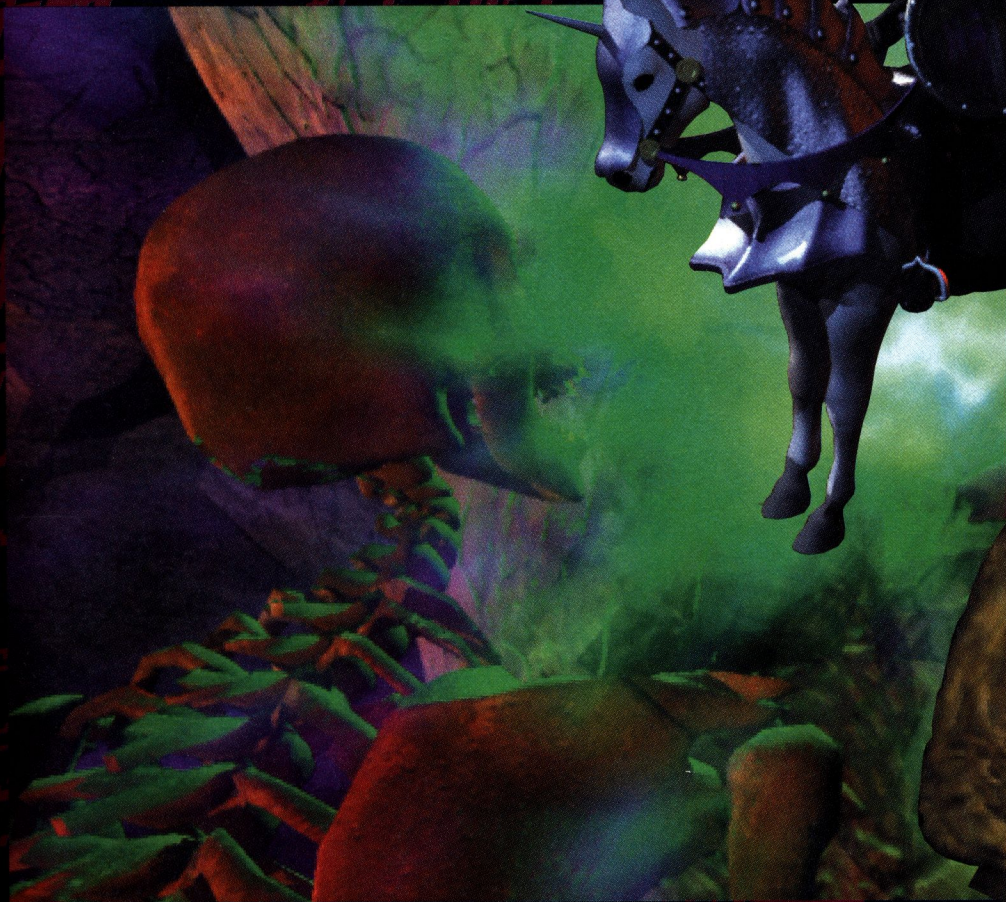
"We had to," explains Jeff, "because if, for example, you're looking at a horse, it's going to be displayed at an angle of 45 degrees all the time and it would look like it had terribly short legs if you were to go and do it all properly."

"So we stretched its legs a bit and gave it huge feet – kind of like a caricature – and then it actually looked like a horse from that viewpoint. It works really well. I

mean, to look at it, you'd never guess that we'd actually interfered with a horse.

"Er... I mean *anatomically* interfered with a horse," he adds, sharpish like.

"That's even worse," interjects particle guru Jon, "Quit while you're ahead."



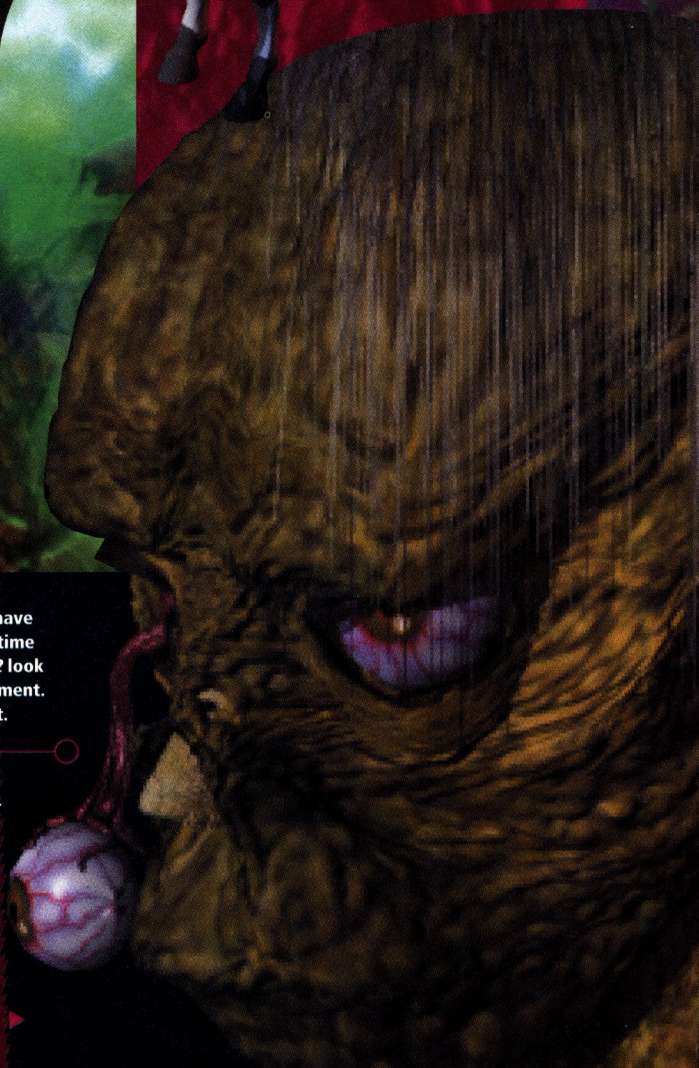
figures and dice, but downright annoying in a real-time computer strategy game. Those who'd bought the game either gave up, grimly soldiered on or got hold of one of the many cheat hacks that rapidly became available on the Internet. The game sold moderately well, but didn't exactly set the world alight.

IT'S BACK – AND IT'S PISSED OFF

But now WarHammer is back on your PC. And here's the good news – the programming team have taken the almost unprecedented step of actually paying attention to what gamers said about the original product and have done their utmost to improve it in every conceivable manner. What we're left with is WarHammer 2: Dark Omen, which looks set to create a splash (and hopefully

(Above & right) The developers have spent a considerable amount of time and effort making WarHammer 2 look totally lush in the visuals department. We reckon it's been well worth it.

stand out among the rash of other releases with the word Dark in the title), by virtue of its many apparent charms – a very impressive 3D engine (fully compliant with accelerator cards), plenty of spangly special effects and a huge, solid slab of overhauled gameplay.





PC Zone paid a visit to Mindscape's Burgess Hill HQ to see how the game was getting along and to chew the fat with some of the team working on it. We are pleased to report that it looks utterly ooh la la. We witnessed the game running on a Power VR-enhanced Pentium and were impressed by the fluidity of the engine (the playing area can be rotated or zoomed in and out throughout the game), the funky lighting and sound effects (the game features 3D sound placement techniques) and the fast-moving nature of the gameplay. A sad, bespectacled spodfest it certainly is not. It's a sexy piece of work.

The game features many of the characters who first appeared in *Shadow Of The Horned Rat*. Once again the player takes command of Commander Bernhardt, leader of the Grudgebringers, as he leads his armies into a series of story-linked battles. There are two main class of enemy – the Greenskins (goblins, orcs, trolls and the like) and the Undead (shambling zombies, skeleton warriors, mummies, vampires and Eammon Holmes). You'll mostly be up against the latter (George A Romero, eat your heart out). On your side, there's a variety of units available. Aside from the Grudgebringer stalwarts, you'll find yourself commanding dwarves, knights, wizards (who, ahem, rock), ogres, flagellants (nihilistic madmen who won't balk at fighting to the death – Morrissey they are not), wood elves and treemen (who are, as their name suggests, made entirely out of tree and are not to be trifled with).



KEEP 'EM PEELED

There are around 30 single-player missions on offer (with subsequent mission packs to follow), and also a dedicated two-player mode, complete with separate battlefields (upon which you can fight as whichever side you choose). Warhammer nutzoids and real-time strategy fans alike should be in seventh heaven.

There's still plenty of work to be done. When PC Zone visited, some of the sprites weren't yet complete – so a slaving pack of flesh-eating ghouls was represented by a placemaker army of what appeared to be fluffy white throwcushions – but the team are making steady progress and plan to have the game ready for release in September. We'll keep you posted – and, of course, we will also be running the definitive review as soon as is magazine possible. Sit tight and just be patient. **Z**

WE ASK, THEY ANSWER: MINDSCAPE

Jeff Gaman is the project leader on Warhammer 2: Dark Omen. He's a most affable and articulate chap, so as he demonstrated some of the game's finer points, we bent his ear with impertinent questions...



PC Zone: Shadow Of The Horned Rat, the first Warhammer game for the PC, was only a moderate success. How did that influence the plans for a sequel?

Jeff Gaman: The initial concept for *Dark Omen* was that it would be very different to *Shadow*. It was going to be an RPG. We got a lot of feedback from people who'd bought *Shadow*, and they wanted it to be more in-depth, with more character interaction. So we thought: "Okay, we'll go along those lines..."

PCZ: So how come you didn't?

JG: Well, at the same time as we were designing *Dark Omen*, we were also finishing off the PlayStation version of *Shadow*. Now, the PlayStation's obviously a different system, and it called for a massive rewrite. The player had to be able to control it all with the joystick. The end result was a simplified interface that was far more accessible. When it came out, everyone was going:

"This is fantastic – it's a far better game than we were expecting." And we were thinking: "Hang on – it's *exactly the same game*. It's just the interface that's changed."

PCZ: And so you decided to go back to the original concept?

JG: Yeah. We threw away everything we'd done on *Dark Omen* and started again. What we have now is pretty high-end technology, but we've focused much more on the gameplay – on the battles. The plot and the character interaction is still there, but it's very much a mechanism for placing each of the battles in context.

JG: So aside from the improved interface, what other changes can we expect?

JG: We've borrowed from the arcade genres. We've got things that are essentially power-ups on the battlefield; it's got a much better sound system; it's got the particle

system too and a far better 3D engine – it's all looking like a high-end production. But the gameplay has been massively enhanced as well. With the first game, we tried to replicate the Warhammer tabletop game on a computer system. That made for a very good game if you're into Warhammer fantasy battles, but a

very clumsy, slow and unresponsive game if you're into real-time strategy computer games. We've not thrown away the Games Workshop rulebook, but we are certainly bending the rules to make them more suitable for a computer game.

PCZ: Did the Games Workshop team object in any way?

JG: No – in fact, they almost cheered when I told them that was what we intended to do.



PCZ: So, is Dark Omen just simpler than the original game, then?

JG: On the surface, yes – the interface is far easier to use – but there's actually far more depth in there. There's a lot of glitz and polish, but deep down there's an awful lot of real nerdy strategy stuff.

For example, we've now got true 3D terrain. It was 3D *visually* in the first game – albeit in only 96 colours so you couldn't really appreciate hills – but as far as the battle engine was concerned, everything was 2D. If there was a hill, it could see straight through it. Now the engine actually recognises the 3D terrain, so you've got proper line-of-sight to deal with. Get your units behind trees and buildings and, as far as the enemy are concerned, they don't exist any more.

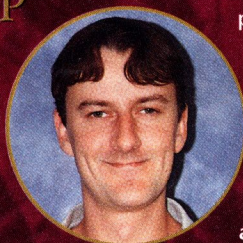
Not only that, but it also brings into play lots of other strategic elements, such as projectile weapons. So it's very deep – but it's also a lot more fun. If you want to win, you can get your archers up onto high ground, block off the advancing infantry with your cavalry – all that kind of stuff. Or you can just get your cannons out and try to blow the shit out of people.





WE ASK, THEY ANSWER: GAMES WORKSHOP

Games Workshop are a runaway success. They've got 150 shops worldwide – 102 of which are in the UK. Aside from their well-known tabletop games and figurines, they also publish magazines (such as *White Dwarf*), run a distribution chain and doubtless control a huge underground army of undead warriors to boot. We asked Games Workshop's Jon Gillard a few questions about GW – and their involvement with the *WarHammer 2* project. And this, dear friends, is what he said...



PC Zone: Games Workshop is pretty successful. How did it all start?

JG: It started in the late '70s as a hobby game distributor and retailer, bringing things like *Dungeons and Dragons* and *Traveller* into the UK. We then merged with Citadel Miniatures in the '80s and started developing our own game systems – and the relevant miniatures to use with them.

In the late '80s we decided to concentrate on our own range. This led to the further development of our two mainstay games – *WarHammer* and *WarHammer 40,000* – culminating in their current format. Along the way, we generated a lot of other games, such as *Necromunda*, *Bloodbowl*, *Man O War* and *Space Hulk*, to name but a few. All these are based in either the *WarHammer* fantasy universe or the *WarHammer 40,000* sci-fi universe.

PCZ: You've got all the angles covered, haven't you?

JG: Yes. We do everything ourselves. We design, manufacture, distribute to independent retailers, retail and sell goods through mail order to ensure hobbyists are given the best product and service possible.

PCZ: So what is *WarHammer* about exactly?

JG: Like all our games, it's a tabletop miniatures wargame. It involves collecting, painting and gaming with fantasy figures. It's an all-encompassing hobby – it covers everything from reading up background material, to modelling and painting your figures and scenery, to actually playing games and campaigns with your mates. I suppose the easiest thing to compare it to is playing with Airfix World War II toy soldiers – but with a definite and elaborate system of rules. And, of course, it's set in the worlds we create.

PCZ: GW were closely involved with the first *PC WarHammer* game. Is that true for this sequel?

JG: Absolutely. We're deeply protective of our imagery – we've spent many years building it up and we keep very tight control to ensure that it isn't misinterpreted. This is one of the reasons why we haven't done many computer games in the past, because we have to be working with people who understand our particular form of madness. We also do it because it's a lot of fun to be involved in.

PCZ: Some parties (*PC Zone* included) felt *WarHammer: Shadow Of The Horned Rat* was just too damn hard. Did you agree?

JG: I have to say I found some of it pretty tough – that bloody Wyvern – but I still played it through five times – perhaps because it was challenging. And no, I didn't know any cheats. A lot of the difficulty stemmed from the interface and the lack of feedback from the game about what was going on – but these are things that Jeff and the guys have addressed in *Dark Omen*. It's always difficult to walk that fine line between "too hard" and "too easy", but I'm confident we've got it right this time.

PCZ: Can you envisage a time when computerised versions of tabletop games will supersede traditional figurine-based ones?

JG: No. I think they're completely different forms of entertainment.

Computer games are more of a pastime, whereas what we do is a very involved hobby. The joys of computer games are many, but inevitably they're not very physical. Collecting miniatures, painting them and physically moving them around a battlefield are all tactile pleasures that I can't see computers matching. During the recent boom years of the computer game business, we've continued to grow at a consistent rate of around 40 per cent a year.



PCZ: Have you ever dressed up as an angry Viking and swung a sword around? You know, for a laugh and stuff.

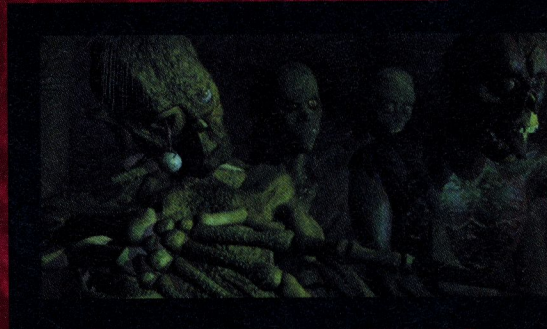
JG: What has my girlfriend been saying? Do you want me to get you an address?

PCZ: How are all those intricate figurines made?

JG: First, a figure designer sculpts the model out of green stuff – that's an official term – at our design studio in Nottingham. Then the model is pressed in a rubber mould, which is used to make master figures. These are used to make production moulds, which are filled with molten metal and then spun in a centrifuge. Next, the figures are ritually sacrificed on an altar to the Chaos God Khorne, which results in the real Citadel miniatures being summoned from the Warp, where they exist as Warp space representations of the Souls Of The Damned. It's a lengthy process, but it's difficult to use the traditional methods, what with virgins being so rare these days.

PCZ: Er, right. Anyway, all this *WarHammer* stuff is incredibly violent. Does violence ever erupt for real?

JG: About the most violent our games get is at about one in the morning when you've had ten pints and your mate's just wiped out your favourite Wraithguard unit. And even then the only consequence is an exchange of slurred insults, followed by both of you glowering across the table until you fall asleep. Or over.



PCZ: Let's veer wildly off-topic for a moment. If a plane and a tank had genitals, which would have the biggest dick?

JG: Oh, come on – you have to be more specific than that. Are we talking about a Lancaster versus a Tiger II, or an A-10 versus an M1 Abrams? Besides, I'm not sure I can answer – it's probably covered by The Official Secrets Act.

PCZ: The future. What does it hold for Games Workshop?

JG: More of the same, really. We now have companies in nine countries. That will increase, as will the number of shops – both independent and GW. We want to build the hobby around the world and we haven't even scratched the surface yet.

Any more computer game tie-ins on the cards?

JG: Yes, simply because we like the idea of our universes being represented in other ways – such as computer games, books or films. If it's fun then we'll consider it. I can't give too much away, but I *can* tell you that at the moment I'm working on five other computer games for release in the next two years – with others in the pipeline after that.

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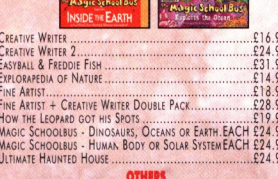
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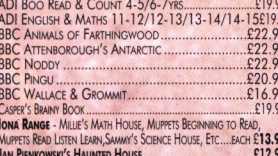
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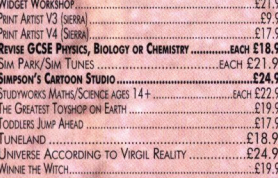
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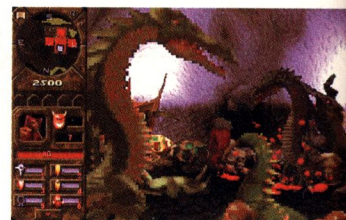
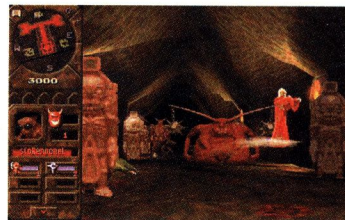
DUNGEON KEEPER IS EASILY ONE OF THE MOST ENGROSSING GAMES currently available. In our last issue we described it as "a game of hitherto unprecedented depth", and by jiminy, we weren't just jerking your chain. For the purposes of this mini-guide, we'll assume you've already got a fairly healthy handle on the gameplay basics (and if you haven't, might we point you in the direction of the manual?). Don't forget that if you're confused about anything you see on-screen, you can simply leave the cursor over it for a while and a little scrolling explanation will appear, followed by a reference number that will steer you to a more detailed description in the instruction manual. We can't possibly cover the full range of tactics in any great depth within just two pages, but these little bijou tip-ettes should give your game something of a kickstart. Kay? Kay.

First things first: always check the map at the start of each level. Take a good look at it – any irregular or unusual areas are probably host to hidden power-ups or similar goodies, which can often lend your side a massive advantage. There's a finite number of beasties up on the unseen surface, which must be shared between yourself and any



Be a good boy scout and check the map at the beginning of every level, any unusual areas can be home to a plethora of power-ups and other goodies.

I think we're alone now. There doesn't seem to be anyone around. So pull up a chair and let's talk *Dungeon Keeper* tactics. It's a complex game, and some of you might be feeling a little lost. Poor wickle woo. Dry those eyes and let **Shirley Brooker** talk you through some of the more sophisticated manoeuvres.



(Above) Bile demons may be weak, but their gaseous attacks are unbearably powerful. (Above right) Dragons are superb all-round monsters – and they're even better than warlocks at researching new rooms and spells.

rival dungeon keepers, so decide right away on your own creature 'policy': you can either claim the portal immediately (to get incoming creatures quickly), or spend time creating large lairs, training rooms and libraries before connecting to the outside world (this approach will encourage more powerful visitors). Personally, we favour method number two (just a hint). Libraries in particular are worth building quickly as they attract warlocks (although other creatures can use them – indeed, well-trained dragons are actually better at research than warlocks).

Don't build a treasure room immediately. Instead, highlight an area of gold and wait until your minions have dug it all away. Then place the treasure room right there. This way, they have less distance to walk, which means you get the money faster. You can repeat this tactic throughout the game, every time you encounter another sizeable gold seam. It also has the added advantage of spreading your treasure around the dungeon, making it harder for intruders to steal, as well as making the payday ceremonies somewhat more orderly.

When it comes to laying out your dungeon, do your best to place hatcheries and lairs near training rooms and libraries: this means your creatures can go about their business with greater efficiency.

Be ever watchful. It may be good for the ego to witness your underground empire expand in all directions, spreading out like a blood-red wine stain on a snow-white carpet, but do bear in mind that virgin areas are weak and easily penetrated (ahem). So follow your mum's advice – and protect yourself. Ensure your imps reinforce the

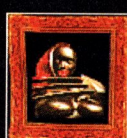


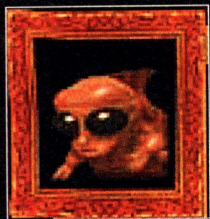
(Above) It may be impressive, but the lightning spell is quite wasteful. It's far more efficient to use the 'heal' spell on your own troops. (Above right) Protect your Dungeon Heart at all costs – any damage done to it can never be restored.

The best of enemies

Oil and water. Chalk and cheese. Hale and Pace. Some pairings just don't encourage greatness. Be aware that certain monsters are prone to fall out with one another. A bloody great civil war could break out within your own corridors if you aren't careful. The only solution is to keep the warring beasties well apart, either by providing them with separate lairs, or by getting rid of one race completely by picking them up and dropping them over the portal. To help you out a little, here's a brief list of some of *Dungeon Keeper's* natural enemies...

• Spiders and flies • Warlocks and vampires • Hellhounds and demon spawn • Horned Reaper and everyone else





Imps

The cutest blighters in the entire game, and consequently the ones who get the hardest time. Imps may be small, but they're utterly essential to your dungeon's upkeep – so guard them jealously. Think of them as the cogs which help keep evil wheels in motion, and pay heed to the following hints:

- Create a few extra imps straight away. Ideally, you should have at least eight. Do keep an eye on the cost, mind.
- Encourage them to use the training room. Level three imps can dash around quickly, while higher ranks can even teleport themselves.
- Possess an imp and dig through the earth yourself if you're in a hurry.
- Slap them regularly – they'll work much harder.
- Imps have a list of priorities. First on their list is the digging out of new areas. Second, the process of claiming land. Third, the reinforcing of existing walls, and finally, all the remaining tasks (taking care of traps, dragging heroes to the prison etc). To force an imp to do something specific, drop it right on top of the area you want it to concentrate on. Slap it around if you have to, until it gets the idea.
- Never forget that imps are crappy fighters. Even an eight year old girl could have take them on and win. Keep them out of harm's way or suffer the consequences.
- Don't let them get any near enemy lightning traps, because they won't stand a chance.

walls as soon as possible (your opponents *may* still get in, but only if they cast the 'destroy walls' spell). Oh, and remember to keep a sharp eye out for lava, water, or bridges – they're all intruder 'hotspots'.

Inevitably, the enemy will occasionally manage to trespass into your domain, so from the outset, plan your dungeon with this eventuality in mind. Clearly, the dungeon heart must be protected at all costs, but you should also make sure the library is safely tucked away deep in the centre – if you don't, and your opponents manage to possess the room, you will lose all your spells. Build lairs or training rooms near obvious weak spots – any incoming nasties will have a fight on their hands pretty quickly as a result. Install guard posts at strategic positions, and place well-trained warlocks on them (they make excellent long-range fighters). Use lots of doors, which you can lock if necessary. Traps are also useful and lightning traps in particular are a highly effective way of killing enemy imps. **Z**



Traps

The ultimate in sneakiness, traps can be either very effective or very annoying, depending on whether they belong to you or the enemy. They're essential for defending your own domain, and a formidable problem when you encounter unwanted ones. Don't forget that enemy traps are invisible until triggered, of course. The moment you uncover an enemy trap, keep your imps away from it. If it's a poison gas trap, send in the bile demons (they're immune). Possess one if necessary. Likewise, send demon spawn or dragons toward lava traps. Also, bear in mind that traps will not work against flying creatures. Possess a fly and you can buzz right by 'em, unharmed.

How to be a complete bastard

Here are a few of the sneakiest *Dungeon Keeper* tactics – the ones which put the 'cun' into 'cunning'...

- Wait until the enemy is crossing one of your bridges – and simply delete it. Ha ha. They all fall down, like toy soldiers, as Martika once sang. Oh yeah, it's best over lava.
- If you've built a boulder trap, you can trigger it yourself with a hearty slap and then change the course of the boulder as it rolls with a few more well-aimed smacks.
- Build a prison and capture lots of heroes, keeping them well-fed with chickens from the hatchery. Then create an empty area, and seal it with a locked door. Drop some heroes in, followed by some of your own creatures. Now sit back and cackle as they fight. As soon as the heroes pass out they'll be dragged to the prison, at which point the process starts all over again. It's a highly efficient – and completely free – training scheme for your beasties.
- If you fancy a few new, more interesting creatures, pick up some flies and beetles (which are a bit crap), and drop them over the portal (*shown below*). Some new critters should soon appear.



- Use bile demons. They might not be the strongest of creatures, but their propensity for delivering nose-vandalising farts make them utterly devastating in enclosed spaces, and if you've ever dropped one in a crowded lift, you'll understand why (especially if you've been eating cabbage or chick peas beforehand). But be careful, because it harms your own side too.
- Possess a fly and you'll find you can uncover huge sections of the map first-hand.
- Use torture rooms wisely. If you happen to torture a creature in there, all other creatures of that type will work harder – and for less pay. *Don't* put warlocks or horned demons within, unless you want an uprising on your hands. Oh, and drop the mistress in if she's done well. She *likes* it in there.
- Build graveyards (*shown below*) as soon as they become available, and place them near combat hotspots so the imps have less distance to drag the corpses. You should be rewarded with plenty of vampires (which are *extremely* powerful).



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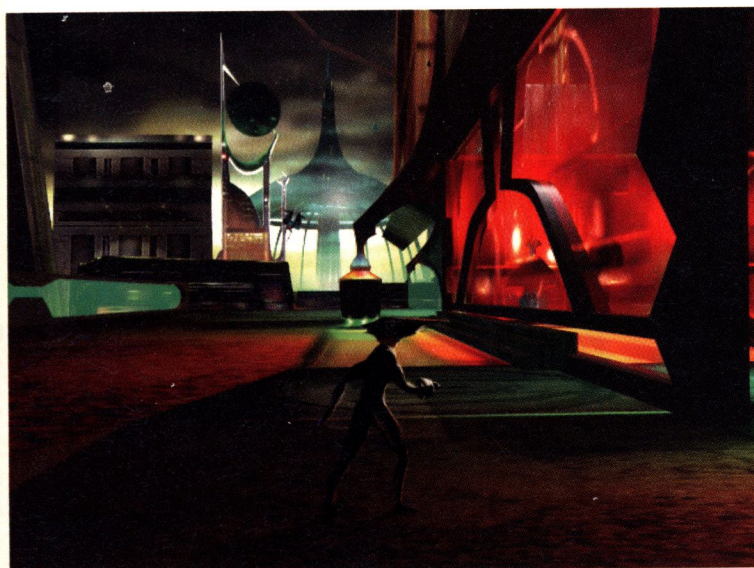
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TROUBLESHOOTER!



MDK - Walkthrough: Part Two



Level 4

Arena 1

The moment Kurt lands, leap into the air and parachute into the chasm. Turn through 180 degrees as you fall – to face in the opposite direction – then position yourself directly over the ice sheet and land on it. It'll shatter like a stained-glass window during a vandalism convention and you'll continue your descent. Assuming you turned round, you should now be facing a sentry – so chain-gun him. A super chain gun power-up can be found on the right-hand platform, protected by a guard. Collecting the power-up will help you nail the sentry more efficiently. As soon as he buys the farm, massacre everyone else and then make your way up to the platform where the sentry was. There you can find a snowboard. Jump on board and the ride will begin...

Arena 2

Negotiate the slide as fast as you can. You can brake by pulling down if you get scared. And remember to avoid the bloody rocks, will you?

Arena 3

The moment your snowboarding jaunt finishes, shoot the guard, then fire at the console to summon a ship. Two guards will leap out, so deal with them, then enter the craft. It will take off, allowing you to bomb the hell out of everything, before returning to its starting position. Once you're back on the ground, destroy the small hut and collect the decoy power-up from within. Now run as quick as you can through the arena. If any of the gun towers are still standing after your bombing run, enter sniper mode and blow the heads off the operators.

As you near the exit, throw the decoy in front of you

as this will distract the bad guys, then chain-gun them. Now you can exit – and find yet *another* snowboard as you do so.

Arena 4

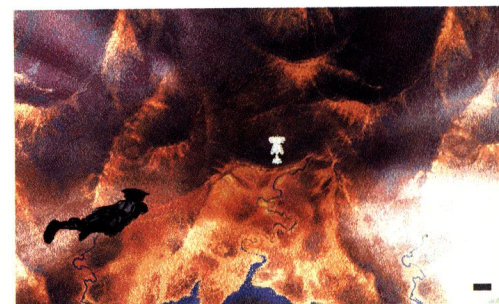
Pay attention as you're surfing through this section – if you collect all ten bones, you'll get a twister power-up at the end. Better still, if you get the *Earthworm Jim* power-ups, your enemies will encounter something that'll 'udderly' surprise them. Ha, ha. Where the course splits, jump up and try to land on the higher level.

Arena 5

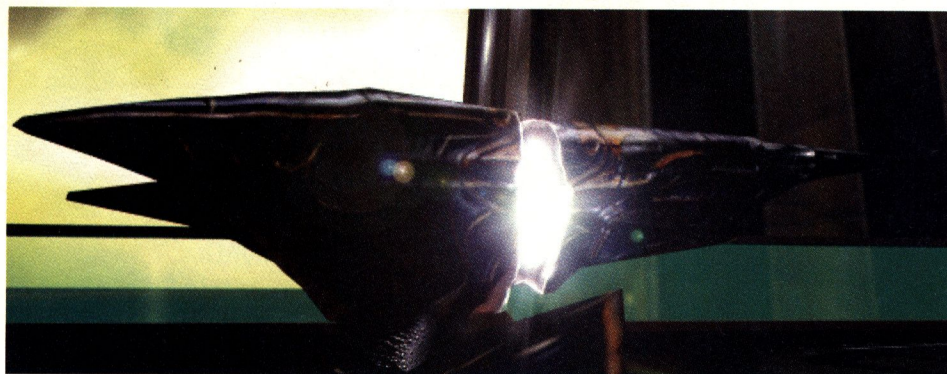
Parachute down and perforate the flying drones as they approach. Next, climb up onto the sub and mosey on down to the tail to

collect a sniper grenade, which can then be used to destroy the guards. At this point, a tank will arrive. Blowing it up will reveal a nuclear bomb.

Locate the atomic lock on the sub door and use the nuke to blow it open. Enter the sub and you'll be facing a boss, floating in a pod above an air current. To kill him, toss grenades into the airstream. Once he's deadified, float up on the air current and follow the passage to the next area...



Last month, **Charlie Brooker** told Emmy-Sue that he'd been having an affair with Sugar, Miranda overheard Brad and Kimberly discussing their secret wedding plans and Ed came round in hospital to discover his arms had been mistakenly sewn to his face. Confused? You will be – after this month's final instalment of *MDK - Walkthrough...*



standstill, then pick off the gun pods and watch it crash. Now run up into the arena. Kill everyone, then find the ramp on the right which leads up to a secret sniping position and a decoy. Using sniper mode, look through the slit in the wall and zoom in on the alert droid in front of the atomic-locked door. Kill it, and then run back into the centre of the arena. A ship carrying a nuclear bomb will fly overhead and drop off two guards. Destroy the guards, then shoot down the ship to collect the bomb. You'll find the exit on the left.

◀ Arena 6

Immediately concentrate your fire on the brass-coloured guard generators, then kill the remaining guards. The crates house a number of power-ups, so blow them up, too. There's a floating gun pod nearby which can be killed in a similar way to the submarine boss. Next, simply float up the air current to float up, and walk on to yet *another* snowboard – and off you go...

Arena 7

As in the previous snowboarding level, try to collect all ten bones and the *Earthworm Jim* icons. At the fork in the tunnel, turn right to receive a power-up.

Arena 8

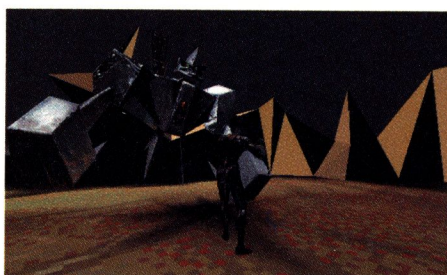
Jump into the air current the moment you land, and get the super chain gun. Shoot the enemy ship while you're still airborne, then drop down and collect the scattered goodies. Run into the next section of the arena and destroy the guard generator. As it blows up, you'll see a health booster appear. Grab it and enter the next room.

Avoid the boss's bombs and destroy the crate on your left. Use the decoy from within to distract the boss. While he's busy, run to the other side of the room and destroy the rest of the crates to receive a large cache of grenades. You know the drill by now – lob the grenades into the airstream, and once the bad guy's dead, jump into the stream. Con-grat-u-lations.

Level 5

Arena 1

Immediately enter sniper mode and then wait for the mothership to fly overhead. Wait until it comes to a



Arena 2

Kill the guards and the alert droid, then climb the sloping platform to jump across to the next platform. Run and jump off the end of this block to reach the edge of the passageway in front of you (this may take some practice).

Stop at the entrance to the tunnel, enter sniper mode and blow up the exploding crate at the other end. This will kill a sentry who's hiding round the corner.

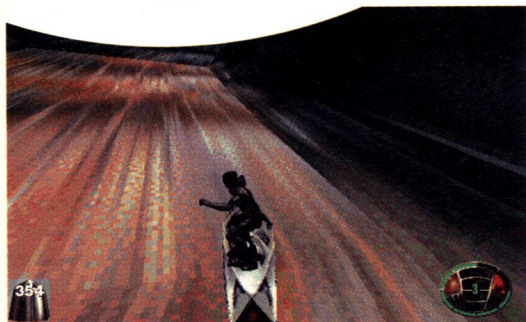
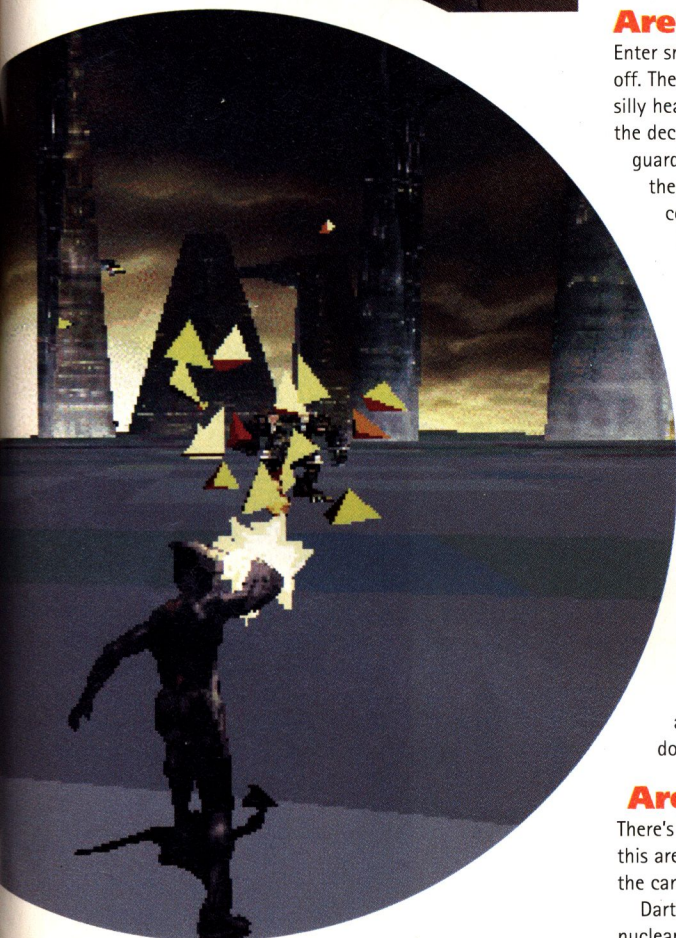
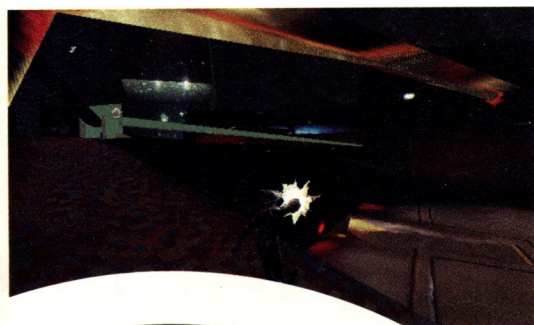
Run down the tunnel and get the sniper grenade, then enter sniper mode again and use it to kill the sentry at the other side of the arena. Once that's done, jump into the arena and clamber onto the platform where the sentry was floating. Get the gun booster and destroy the gunship, which will now appear.

At this point a forklift will start attacking you. Kill the driver by shooting off its roof, then use your chain gun to push it over the yellow panel on the floor. This will deactivate the forcefield and allow you to enter the hole. Tee hee, snigger.

Arena 3

Float up the air shaft and then drop down onto the ramp which leads up into the arena. Kill the irritating guards, then face the control room in the distance. Using sniper mode, zoom in on the technician and fire until he topples over and hits the button on the wall. Exit sniper mode and wait for the large arm to explode and release the ship. Next, pick off the gun pods on its seedy underbelly.

Now run to the front of the ship, enter sniper mode and



kill the captain. The ship should crash into a wall. Jump through the broken wall and collect the decoy to the right. Turn around and follow the left-hand path to the next arena.

Arena 4

Ooh, pretty, eh? Shoot the lanky technicians, then collect the mortar from the other side of the room. Now riddle the rotating globe with bullets until it smashes through the floor. Follow it down, chain-gunning more technicians as you go. The final technician will run into the centre of the room and open a secret hatch in the floor. Drop down this hatch, buddy...

Arena 5

Enter sniper mode and take out the alert droid before it kicks off. Then zoom in on the two sleeping guards and blow their silly heads off. Run to the doorway on the right and hurl the decoy out in front of you before you reach it. A floating guard will follow it, giving you an opportunity to blow the shit out of him. Now kill the remaining guards and collect the nuke and grenade.

Run back into the centre of the arena and enter the doorway opposite. Kill everyone in the room, then run up the ramp in the corner. Next, use the grenades to blow up the three guard generators in the corner and then re-enter sniper mode. Zoom in to the other side of the arena and target the alert droid standing next to the thumper power-up. Kill it and then exit sniper mode. Jump across to the small platform above the arena entrance, then across to the other side. Grab the thumper and the mortars, then stand at the edge of the green hole. Enter sniper mode and bung some mortars into the hole to kill the guard below, then leap in.

Follow the corridor along and up, collecting the sweets as you go. The exit from the corridor is guarded by another sentry, so be careful. Now walk out onto the balcony and throw the nuke onto the atomic lock. Wait for the door to fall open, then float down like a big rubber feather – you lovely man, you.

Arena 6

There's a super chain gun hidden behind the first spike in this arena, so grab it, then make your way forward through the canyon, blowing the crap out of everything as you go.

Dart into the last section and collect the turkey and the nuclear bomb. Toss the nuke at the locked door.

Arena 7

Skedaddle to the blocks on the left as you enter, and then climb up to find a decoy. Use it to distract the guards who drop from the heavens – and then go kill 'em all.

Now jump down to the floor, run to the far side of the room and climb onto the block with the super chain gun. Use this on the second wave of guards. Be sure to kill the alert droids, then take out the three forklifts.

Next, drop to the floor and chain-gun one of the forklifts over to the block on the left of the entrance. Push against this block, and then jump onto the forklift. You can now

LENTIL AGILITY

Far out, man! It's, like, hey this virtual town - heavy duty 3D scene. They're building a Utopia so the proletariat can live together as one in perfect harmony. And when there's hassle we just party away the bad karma, brother.

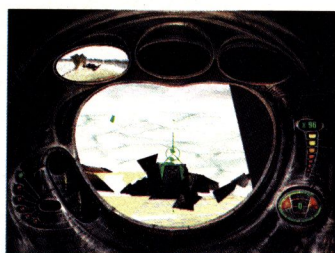
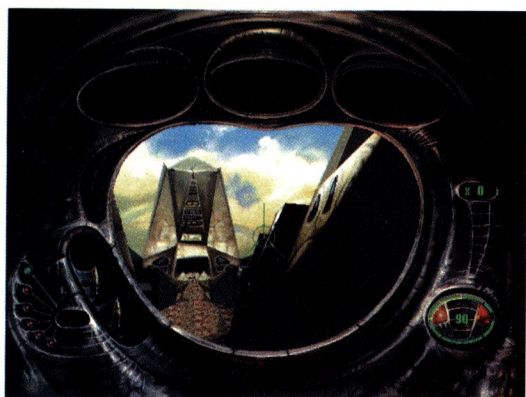
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◀ reach the edge of the block and pull yourself up. Jump to the next platform and the walkway which runs across the centre of the room. Follow this across to the other blocks and jump onto the sloping one. From the top of this, turn to face the upper platform which rings the room. Jump up onto it and make your way around, counter-clockwise, until you are standing beneath a platform with an apple on it. Wait for another forklift to drive towards you, then shoot it so that it stops next to the platform. Jump on the forklift and onto the platform, get the apple, then leap to the platform in the centre of the room. From there, turn left and float across to reach the exit.



Arena 8

Enter sniper mode, zoom in on the gun pod at the far side of the arena and shoot it once to get its attention. As it turns to face you, shoot through the front to kill the idiot inside.

Next, walk down the ramp and go a-murdering. Once everybody's dead, destroy the second gun pod, then run round to the other side of the tower.

Enter sniper mode for the sixteenth billionth time (you should be a wise hand at this by now) and use side-step to move out from behind the tower – the tower is shielding you from the last gun pod. Look up and zoom in on the open section of the gun to kill the operator. Now run



back right to the top of the ramp and turn around.

Jump off from the highest point and float down to the right-hand tower. You'll find that as you float over it, you will be lifted up to collect an apple. Once you've done that, turn to face the middle tower and float into the air current. Proceed to collect the next apple, and then float to the last tower. Collect the final apple and turn back down the way you came. Float into the door at the top of the arena to exit.

Arena 9

From the edge of the cave, enter sniper mode and zoom in on Gunter, the large mine crawler supervisor. Shoot him a couple of times and he'll soon get a right old bag on and activate a large door.

Drop down and land on the mound in the centre of the room. Stand at the edge and wait for a large stone boulder to roll by, then drop down after it and shoot it until it blows up. Run around the trench, collecting power-ups as they rain down. Find the path which leads back up to the mound and wait for the mothership to fly overhead. Enter sniper mode and shoot off the pods on its underside – as a result, it will explode to release a wave of guards into the arena. Kill each and every one of them and Gunter will open the door, jump into the room and kidnap Bones. Bastard.



Level 6

Arena 1

Grab the decoy as it lands, then wait for the guard to break through the glass wall. Run up the long sloping walkway until you reach the room containing a generator and homing mortar power-up. Blow up the generator with your chain gun and jump into the hole it leaves behind.

Arena 2

Straight away, turn to face Gunter and his pack of dogs. Enter sniper mode and use the homing mortars to wipe out the mutts. Exit sniper mode and take advantage of your chain gun to finish off any that might have survived. Then phone up the RSPCA and confess all.

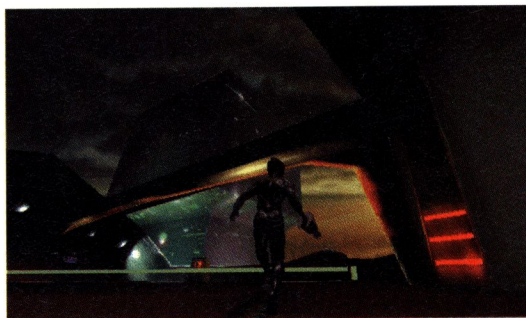
Now, run up behind Gunter and chase him round the room, firing like billy-o as you go. Given time, he'll eventually run to the centre and jump through the floor, leaving a hole. Give chase, young man, give chase.

Arena 3

Run and jump onto the lowest of the platforms, then leap across them until you reach the chain gun power-up. Now turn left and leap onto the wall ledge to collect the homing mortar. Run down this ledge to the other side of the room, then jump onto the nearest floating platform. Turn to face the entrance wall and jump on the spot to reveal the next platform. Jump onto that, then follow the rest around until you are standing across from the stone tower. Destroy the gun pod on top of this tower, then jump over to it and drop down.

Arena 4

Immediately grab as many of the power-ups as you can. The moment you get a decoy or twister power-up, use it to kill the guards. Enter sniper mode and target Gunter on top of his tower. Shoot



him and eventually he will fall off and hit the floor, causing the tower to collapse. Run back to the start of the arena and use the sloping platform to jump across to the fallen tower. Run up to Gunter's platform and drop down the hole. We have now arrived at the end, dear friend. Take a deep breath.

Arena 5

Parachute into the arena and steer yourself over to the third room – you'll recognise this room because it's the one with the snack dispenser. Jump onto the button next to it and a snack will drop out of the machine. Collect this and throw it out into the main section of the arena. Gunter's a right old lardy bastard, so he'll run after the snack, allowing you to collect the nuclear bomb.

As soon as you've got the nuke, run to the working air vent and jump into the current. Once you're level with the platform, drop onto it and use the nuke to destroy the lock.

Repeat this process for the remaining locks and Bones will be a free pooch once again.

Once you've seen your four-legged friend leap into the snack dispenser, run over and collect the Bones/snack hybrid which drops out of the machine.

Throw this at Gunter and he'll gobble it up with gusto, leaving you to sit back, relax and enjoy the bizarre end sequence.

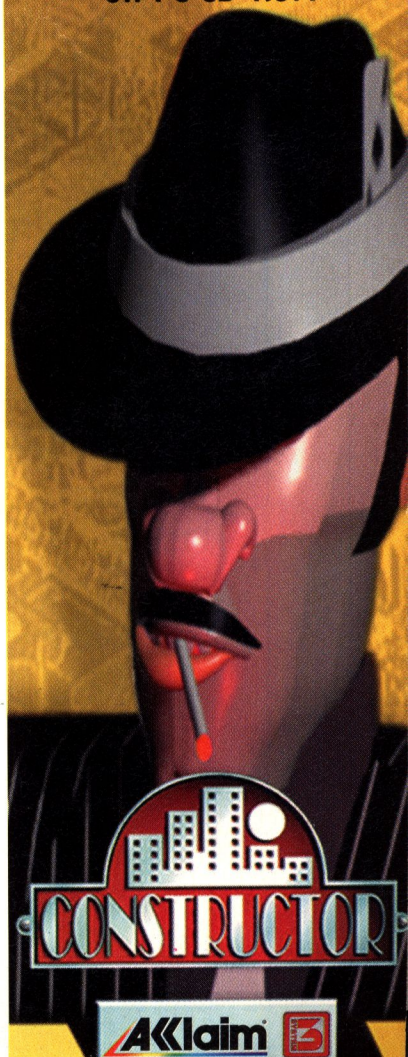
See if you can sing along in time. 2



GUARANTEED HIT

In this town, you do whatever it takes to win: hit targets, eliminate problems, make millions. Hey, I'm a businessman... my family's huge in asset protection. Building insurance? I'll give you a policy that's as solid as a concrete overcoat.

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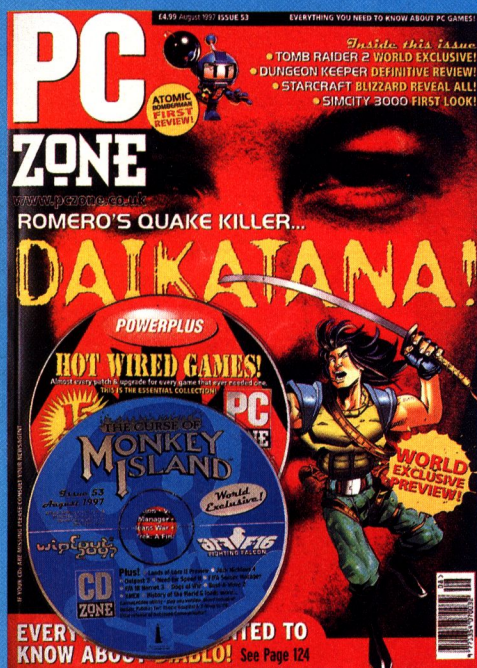
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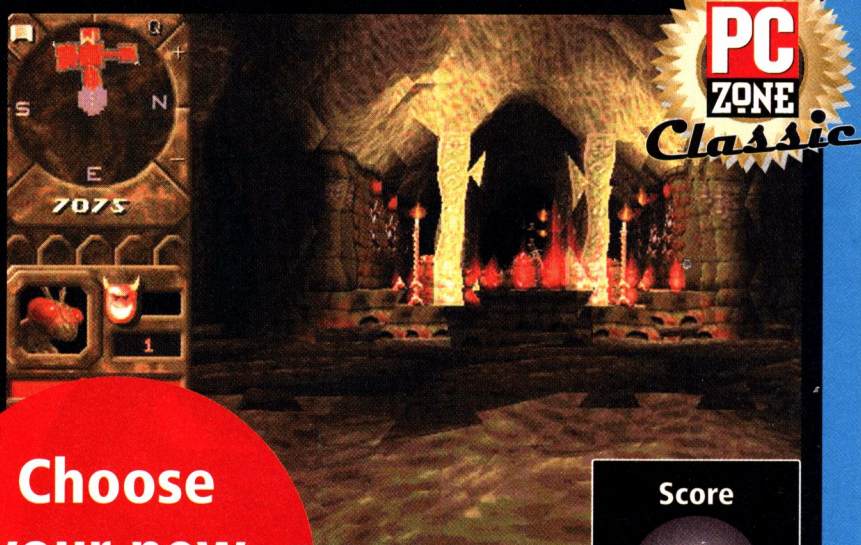
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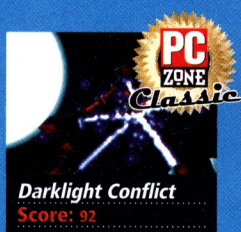
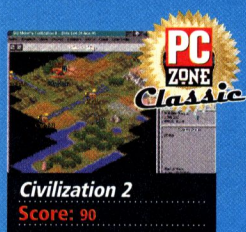
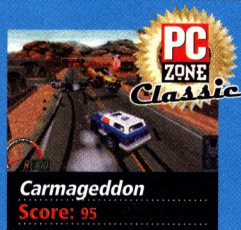
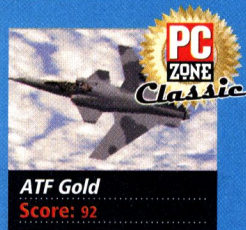


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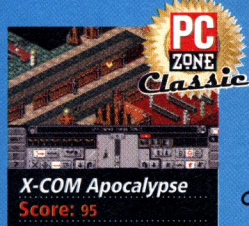
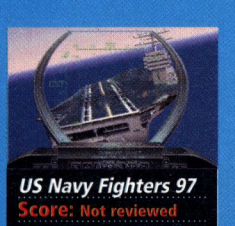
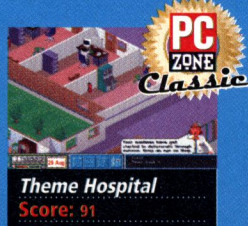
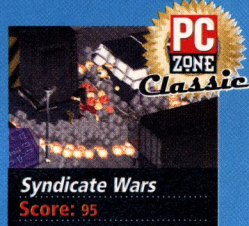
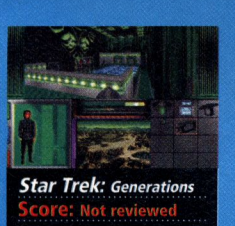
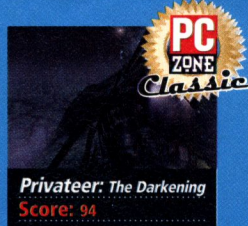
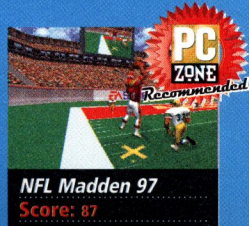
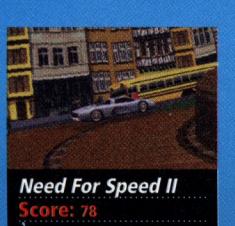
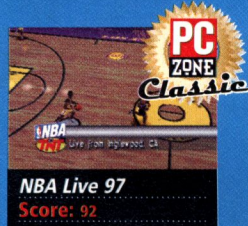
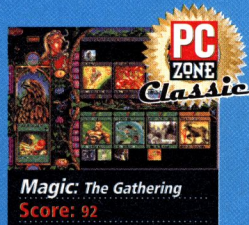
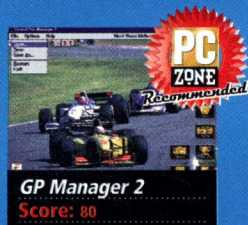
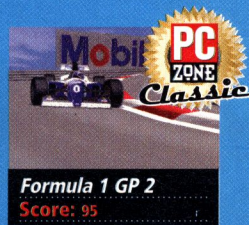
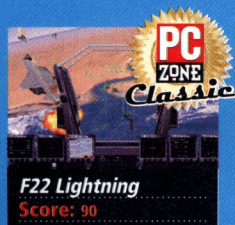
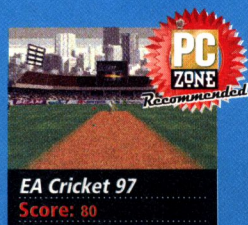
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PC ZONE

Welcome to the *PC Zone* Recommended section. Here you'll find the cream of the games we've painstakingly reviewed and picked out over the years, plus those we feel should go down in PC gaming history as all-time Classics.



IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP IT simple, we've split it up into genres: Action games, Sports simulations, Adventure games, Flight simulations, Driving games, Role-playing games and Strategy games.

The top ten games of each genre are then listed, with a brief summary of the game, review score, publisher and contact number. Most of the games listed here were awarded *PC Zone* Classic status (90 per cent and above), and some managed a *PC Zone* Recommended award (80 per cent and above) at the time that they were reviewed. To achieve the highest accolade, a game must not only be very playable, entertaining and offer long-term appeal,

but it must also be original and/or offer something new and worthwhile to the genre. To this end, we've included some sequels, and although these show a lower score than the original title, they are deemed better (they didn't get a higher score 'cos the game had already

been done, so the sequels weren't exactly bursting with originality – okay?), so this guide isn't a list of the highest scoring games ever reviewed by *PC Zone*, but a guide to the best games currently out there.

When you're reading the reviews in the rest of the magazine, please remember to bear this section in mind. The highest scoring game is supposed to represent a benchmark in a particular genre, and we will always be comparing new games with this, in accordance with the above criteria. If you use this section along with the 'In Perspective' guide that now accompanies every review, you should be able to gauge pretty accurately whether a game is worth buying, whatever your personal preference and taste. As a result, you will see games dropping out of this section as new and better titles are released, so keep your eyes peeled for new entries in each of the genres.



Jeremy Wells, Editor

Recommended

Action



QUAKE (96)

The seminal 3D shoot 'em up and quite possibly the most important PC game ever released. Very atmospheric when played as a one-player game and untouchable when played over a network. Despite the fact that it's now pretty aged, it's still *the* office favourite. Definitely 'pour hommes'!

Publisher:

GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)



TOMB RAIDER (94)

The first game to take the *Alone In The Dark* principles and apply them in a new, in-er-face way. The play area is vast, the puzzles are clever and it's eminently playable thanks to an incredibly agile control system. If you have a 3Dfx card, you're in for a treat.

Publisher:

Core/EIDOS (0181 780 2222)



DARK FORCES (95)

Although not as technically impressive as *Quake*, *Dark Forces* is still held up as a better one-player game by some and yet slandered by others for not having a multi-player facility. That aside, it's a thrilling 3D mix of shooting action and exploration.

Publisher:

LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)

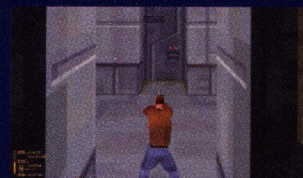


DUKE NUKEM 3D (93)

The debate rages on, and there are still an awful lot of people who rate *Duke* over *Quake*. It's not as technically impressive, but brags gameplay by the bucketload in one-player mode and when played over a network.

Publisher:

EIDOS Interactive (0181 780 2222)



FADE TO BLACK (94)

The unofficial sequel to the excellent *Flashback*, this is a near-perfect blend of third-person exploration and combat action. The technical pre-cursor to the fantastic *Tomb Raider*, it's a classic in its own right.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



DARKLIGHT CONFLICT (92)

It might not have a mega-budget cast or a film licence, but *Darklight* knocks spots off just about every other space combat sim there is. It looks utterly fantastic and the 3D engine is quite superb and very fast. No campaign mode, but plenty of action.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING (94)

The ultimate mix of space combat, *Elite*-style trading and FMV action, *Privateer 2* was the first big budget release from Origin to use live action in a positive way. Packed with stars, this is pukka stuff.

Publisher:

Origin/EA (01753 549442)



MAGIC CARPET 2 (92)

The original wooed us with its speed and smoothness – this is even better, with new night-time bits, monsters and a very useful on-line help system. Technically exquisite, the game engine's yet to be bettered.

Publisher:

Bullfrog/EA (01753 549442)



TIE FIGHTER (94)

Still rated by many as the finest space combat sim ever released, it successfully blends all the kudos of *Star Wars* with a wicked new engine for super-fast *TIE* on *X-Wing* fistcuffs.

Publisher:

LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES (90)

Of all the *HERC*-based games, this is the best. Successfully mixing real-time combat action with a thoroughly stomping engine, it's action-packed and fab over a network.

Publisher:

Activision (01895 456700)

Driving



CARMAGEDDON (95)

Awesome arcade-style racer that's heavy on the hit 'n' run and gameplay. Loads of different cars to choose from, plenty of tracks, three ways to play and a fab multi-player network mode make this one of the most entertaining driving games ever.

Publisher:
SCI (0171 585 3308)



NASCAR RACING 2 (92)

A worthy upgrade of the original game, featuring a new, smoother 3D engine, more controllable cars, improved opponent AI, a simple single-screen car set-up and a multi-player network option. With the constant stream of headset messages to add atmosphere, this is a racing sim fan must.

Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)



NETWORK Q RAC RALLY (94)

The seminal rally racer from Europress is the ultimate in skiddy, slidey action. 27 (count 'em) stages, loads of cars, a fantastic eight-way network option and varied terrain and conditions make this superior to the limited *Sega Rally*. Go buy it!

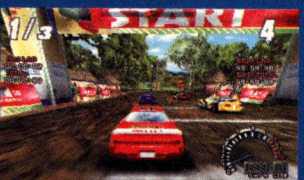
Publisher:
Europress Software (01625 859444)



INDYCAR 2 (90)

If you don't mind going round and round in circles but still crave that unbelievable detail, this is the only real alternative to *F1GP2*. Technically mind-blowing, though a little chuggy on anything but a high-end Pentium in SVGA mode.

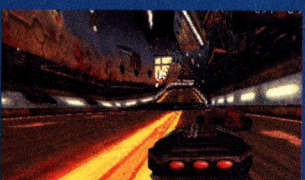
Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)



SCREAMER 2 (93)

Whereas the first game cocked its hat at the classic *Ridge Racer*, this game is *Sega Rally* in just about every way but name – except that it's better in every way. Like *TNFS*, it's very much an arcade, which makes it ideal for a quick fix.

Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



POD (90)

One of the first racing games to support 3Dfx, Direct3D and MMX. The graphics are awesome (understatement of the year) and with new cars, tracks and power-ups promised to be posted regularly on the Internet, you'll never get bored.

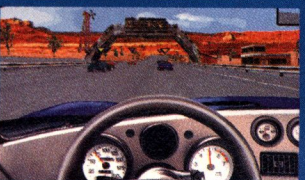
Publisher:
Ubi Soft (0181 944 9000)



MICRO MACHINES 2 (93)

The console classic is converted to the PC as new tracks provide a new challenge. The easy-to-use control system means it's user-friendly for the uninitiated. This version comes with a track designer.

Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)



THE NEED FOR SPEED (89)

Exciting arcade racing action at its best, with a good selection of cars and road tracks. Suicidal oncoming traffic and angry cops entrench *TNFS* firmly within the 'arcade' game sector.

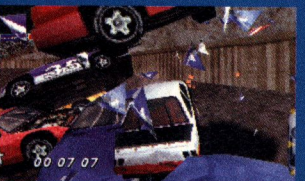
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 2 (92)

The amazing sequel to the greatest F1 driving sim ever. Updated brilliantly for the 94/95 season with all-new detailed circuits, cars and teams. Ninja Pentium needed to run the hi-res mode – but it's still great.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)

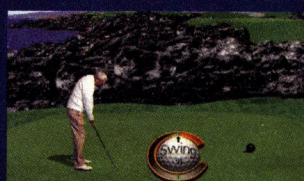


DESTRUCTION DERBY 2 (86)

Another sequel, but this one's actually much better than the first game. The tracks are much improved, the cars handle much better and there's loads more options. Worth buying even if you own the original.

Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)

Sports



LINKS LS (94)

The classic golf sim gets an update, and unsurprisingly it's fab. There's more options, luscious graphics and a redesigned menu and view selection system. There's even a built-in upgrader for all the old data disk courses you splashed out on.

Publisher:
EIDOS Interactive (0181 780 2222)



VIRTUAL POOL (91)

No self-respecting pool aficionado should miss out on this simple but very playable sim with an ingenious mouse-drag control system and impressive engine. One-player games are fun, but go for the two-player games and network links, which are even better.

Publisher:
Interplay (01628 423666)



PGA TOUR 96 (94)

There's little choice between *PGA Tour 96* and *PGA European Tour*, it just depends on which accents and jumpers you prefer. Both offer fantastic graphics, an easy-to-use control method and plenty of customisable play options. Golfing at its best.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



NHL HOCKEY 97 (90)

Visually slick and very playable, this 'all-new' updated *NHL* game features some graphical tweaks and a smoother, faster engine. There's a handful of national sides thrown in as well as the most recently completed season's statistics and teams.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



ACTUA SOCCER (92)

Still the best soccer game on the PC, thanks to a super 3D polygonal engine and motion-captured players. One-player games might be frustrating, but in two-player mode it excels, and Barry Davies provides some knockout commentary.

Publisher:
Grenlin Interactive (01142 753423)



PRO PINBALL: TIMESHOCK! (91)

Remember *PP: The Web*? Well, this is the second table in the series, and it's better in every way. The ball dynamics and detail have been improved as have the sound effects. Plus the world's dirtiest computer game voice returns to "Lock those balls".

Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



NBA LIVE 97 (92)

Much better than the previous version (which lacked drive), this offering is well put together. With excellent graphics, sound effects and a hip soundtrack, thankfully it plays as good as it looks.

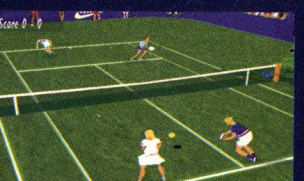
Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



MADDEN NFL 97 (87)

This PC incarnation is well up to the quality seen on the console versions, with all the features and slick presentation we assume as standard for an EA Sports release. The best American footie game on the PC.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS 97 (92)

This game doesn't quite better *Super Tennis* on the SNES, but it's as close as you'll come on the PC. With a simple control system it's instantly playable, but the women's skirts still don't fly up when they serve.

Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)



FRONT PAGE SPORTS BASEBALL (85)

An interesting game that nicks the best bits from other baseball games. Gameplay is a tad on the uninspired side as things plod along, but then this is a baseball game.

Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)

Adventures



ALONE IN THE DARK 3 (95)

Better than the previous *AITD* instalments, *Alone 3* is a tense, ambient tale of Navajo Indian magic and reincarnation that unfolds in the usual *AITD* manner. Now available as part of a compilation budget pack.

Publisher:
Infogrames (0181 738 8199)



INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS (93)

Follow a post-*Raiders* Indy in his search for the submerged metropolis. Three ways to play make for a high replayability factor, and the inter-character banter is brilliant.

Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



BIOFORGE (95)

Futuristic *Alone In The Dark*-style game with impressive graphics, puzzles and soundtrack. Often preferred over *AITD* games as its unique blend of arcade combat is explosive. The only drag is EA's refusal to make a sequel for it.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE (93)

Adeline's visually stunning isometric journey through the surreal land of TwinSun stole our hearts in 1995. The gloriously animated characters really bring the static backgrounds to life. *LBA* is pretty difficult, but time investment is worthwhile.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



SYSTEM SHOCK (95)

This futuristic first-person cyberpunk adventure from the makers of *Ultima* was initially overlooked by many people. Now available on budget, this is a must-buy for those new to the game. The graphics might be a little dated, but the atmosphere is invigorating.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



SAM & MAX (93)

Steve Purcell's hilarious dog/rabbit 'freelance police' duo's first and only PC outing, in which they need to solve a host of bizarre puzzles. An all-talkie adventure with a gag-laden script, this is an essential budget-priced purchase even if you're not a massive point-and-click fan.

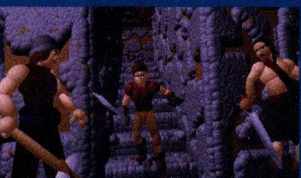
Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



STAR TREK TNG: A FINAL UNITY (94)

A style oozier. At times it's as if you're inside a *Star Trek: TNG* episode. Non-linear and beautifully presented, it's a Trek-head must-buy. Yet to be bettered.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



ECSTATICA II (90)

We dubbed it "An adventure with balls". It's hard, but one of the most rewarding adventures we've ever seen. It constantly surprises and is sure to keep even the most battle-weary adventure fan busy for weeks.

Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)



DISCWORD II (93)

Perfect Entertainment's immaculate sequel to *Discworld* follows would-be wizard Rincewind in his search for the Grim Reaper. Not as hard as the first game, but bigger and better looking. *Discworld II* is a universally appealing adventure game.

Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)



THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND 2: LECHUCK'S REVENGE (PRE-PC ZONE)

Anyone with even a casual interest in adventures must have this game. The graphics look dated, but the one-liners are side-splitters. And it's on budget!

Publisher:
Virgin (0171 368 2255)

Role-Playing Games



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD 2: LABYRINTH OF WORLDS (94)

This improves on almost every aspect of its prequel, *The Stygian Abyss*. You explore a complex, ever-evolving dungeon; it has unsurpassed atmosphere and interaction.

Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)



RAVENLOFT: STONE PROPHET (78)

A great improvement overSSI's previous AD&D *Ravenloft* RPGs. The graphics are average but the intuitive spell/combat system is a joy.

Publisher:
Mindscape (01444 246333)



ULTIMA VII (89)

Arguably the best of all the *Ultima* games, *Ultima VII* blends character interaction with the exploration of the detailed world of Britannia. This is the last of the *Ultima* series to give you complete party control. Soon to reappear as *Ultima On-Line*.

Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN ABYSS (PRE-PC ZONE)

This one took RPGs away from first-person tile-based RPGs. Amazing architecture, witty characterisations, layers of storyline and the best ending of any computer game in history. Buy it and believe it.

Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)



DIABLO (88)

Diablo is standard hack 'n' slash fare but the game's designers pull the whole thing off with such style that the overall game experience is addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game.

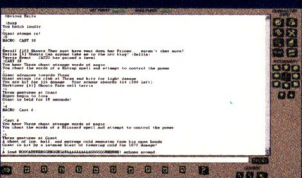
Publisher:
Zabrac/Blizzard (01626 332233)



EYE OF THE BEHOLDER II (PRE-PC ZONE)

It's one of those 'olde-worlde', first-person RPGs, but its progressive, party-based gameplay and subtle story elements set it worlds apart from all the other dross. The flick-screen graphics are a bit dated, but dungeon design is still worth a look.

Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



TERRIS (88)

A MUD in the old-school style of text-based RPGs, but so addictive we're still playing it. The quests, puzzles and monsters will keep you going for days. The gameplay is excellent, if you can handle the 'texty-ness'.

Publisher:
AOL (0800 2797444)



LANDS OF LORE (PRE-PC ZONE)

Graphics and gameplay! Westwood Studios' graphical flair shines in this push-scrolling story about a witch. Adding non-player characters to your party keeps it interesting. CD version features Patrick Stewart.

Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



MERIDIAN 59 (86)

This ground-breaking on-line RPG, though cursed with garish and horrible graphics, allows thousands of people to interact with each other in the same fantasy universe at the same time. Currently one of the best on-line multi-player RPGs around.

Publisher:
3DO Company (0181 296 1965)

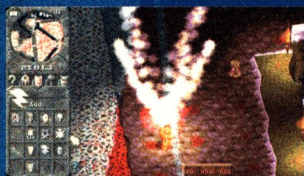


BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR (PRE-PC ZONE)

First-person perspective RPG with a huge game world and fairly complex battle system. Failed to take the RPG crown from *Ultima* due to limited character interaction, but a worthy second-hand buy.

Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)

Strategy



DUNGEON KEEPER (96)

A game with a genre almost impossible to define, DK takes *SimCity 2000*, C&C and *Ultima Underworld* and remoulds them into one hell of a title. Fantastic gameplay, and a lifespan on a par with the Queen Mother.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



MASTER OF ORION 2 (92)

Very sophisticated space exploration/strategy game that rewards long-term play. If you're willing to put the time into it, *Orion 2* will stay on your hard drive for aeons.

Publisher:

MicroProse (01454 893893)



SYNDICATE WARS (95)

One of the best strategy games of all time gets a sequel, and what a fabulous sequel it is too. It houses a wealth of intricate levels, gorgeous graphics and enough gratuitous violence to keep anyone happy.

Publisher:

EA/Bullfrog (01753 549442)



SETTLERS 2 (92)

Manage little people, build stuff for their little towns, then kick the shit out of the opposition. *Settlers 2* is a brilliant game, but make sure you've got plenty of time on your hands when you start playing. It really is that addictive!

Publisher:

Blue Byte (01604 232200)

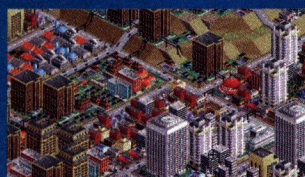


X-COM 3: APOCALYPSE (95)

A revamped engine and a healthy helping of real-time combat have brought the fantastically addictive *X-COM* series bang up to date. If you like your strategy games deep and meaningful, you should buy *X-COM 3* immediately. It'll keep you busy for weeks.

Publisher:

MicroProse (01454 893893)



SIMCITY 2000 (92)

A classic game that deserves its reputation as one of the all-time greats in the strategy world. Build and maintain the city of your dreams and cope with all the problems a real-life Mayor would come up against. It's a lot more fun than it sounds, trust us.

Publisher:

Maxis (0171 505 1500)

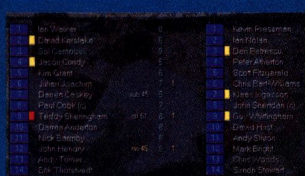


COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT (94)

...or C&C in SVGA with a few new units. It's a testament to the original's gameplay that the sequel can get away with adding few new features and still be fun to play.

Publisher:

Virgin (0171 368 2255)

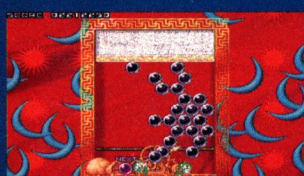


CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 (90)

So you want to be a football manager, eh? Well so does our Jeremy, which is why he spends his life playing this, the most realistic, addictive football management game available.

Publisher:

EIDOS (0181 780 2222)

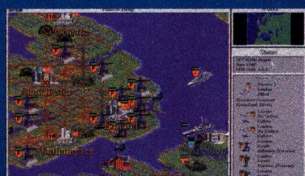


PUZZLE BOBBLE (94)

We can't agree exactly where *Puzzle Bobble* fits in *PC Zone Recommends*. Does it belong in here, with the *Civs* and *Sims* of the PC gaming world, or should it go in the action section? Who cares, as long as it's in...

Publisher:

GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)



CIVILIZATION 2 (90)

Explore the world, conquer territories and research new technologies in one of the most successful strategy games ever. It's not that different to the first one but it merits a '90s update and a place here.

Publisher:

MicroProse (01454 893893)

Flight Simulations



EF2000 (97)

With fantastic graphics and a very realistic flight model, this is one of the best flight sims on the PC. Not even Microsoft's mighty *Flight Sim* can topple it from the top of the PC Zone prop-head ladder.

Publisher:

Ocean/DID (0161 832 6633)



US MARINE FIGHTERS (92)

Lovely graphics and a realistic enough flight model. Originally released as a mission disk for *US Navy Fighters*, *Marine Fighters* now comes as part of the *US Navy Fighters Gold* pack, so go get that instead!

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



FLIGHT UNLIMITED (96)

This was the first flight sim to sport truly amazing graphics and a frighteningly realistic flight model. You don't get to kill anyone (just like *Flight Sim 95*) but it still stands up well against today's competition, and you still need a beefy machine to fly it.

Publisher:

Looking Glass/Virgin (0171 368 2255)



FLYING CORPS (92)

Action-packed WWI flight sim with neat graphics. Nostalgic gamers will recall *Red Baron* as one of the greatest WWI flight sims ever - this improves on the old classic to become the best WWI sim currently available for the PC.

Publisher:

Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



APACHE LONGBOW (96)

The *EF2000* of helicopter sims, in as much as it marries fab graphics with a realistic flight model. The structure encourages you to adopt the same tactics as a real Apache pilot (or so we're told) and the missions are challenging and varied enough to keep you at it for weeks. It's big, too.

Publisher:

Digital Integration (01276 684959)



COMANCHE 3 (92)

This latest version of the *Comanche* flight sim is without a doubt the finest we've seen yet, sporting juicy terrain graphics due to a revamped VoxelSpace engine. Despite an accurate flight model, it still delivers intense gameplay, and is extremely good fun.

Publisher:

NovaLogic (0171 405 1777)



FLIGHT SIM 95 (95)

The longest-running and most successful PC flight sim. An incredibly realistic flight model prompted the US Air Force to use this software as a training tool for their pilots. (But you don't get to shoot anything.)

Publisher:

Microsoft (0181 242 4194)



JETFIGHTER III (91)

The follow-up to one of the most popular sims ever. Fly over three and a half million square miles of accurately-mapped terrain of South America. You get to shoot things too, but there's no duty free option.

Publisher:

EIDOS Interactive (0181 780 2222)



SU27 FLANKER (95)

One for flight sim purists. Admittedly the graphics are crap, but our reviewer raved about it. A great flight model and superb mission builder make it an essential buy for prop-heads everywhere, just don't expect your best mate to be impressed.

Publisher:

Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



A-10 CUBA (90)

Functional graphics (cough) for a game that captures the imagination, mainly because the plane is an absolute joy to fly. Slightly limited with the absence of a fully-fledged campaign but great fun nonetheless, and pretty speedy on a modest Pentium.

Publisher:

Activision (01895 456700)

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Hello! It's me, Charlie Brooker! I'll be answering all your letters this month! And gosh, what a lot of letters there are! It'll take me forever to get through that lot! Only joking! It won't take forever at all! At least, I do hope it won't! Still, I'd best press on! When I've finished I'm going to gouge both my eyes out! With my own thumbs! The end is nigh! The end is nigh!



WORD PROCESSOR

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BRAZILIAN POST OFFICE "IS A SHIT"

I used to subscribe to your mag, but since I am from Brazil I quit because the post office from this part of world is a shit. On a good post office day I used to receive the June issue in August, so that's why I'm buying the mag from the newsstand. It may cost more, but at least I get the June issue in June. By the way, I've seen a piece on the game *Little Big Adventure 2*, but you did not give a release date. Why? And by the way, could you send me the beta of the game?

Love your magazine, not just for the visuals but for the stuff written in it, and sorry for my bloody English.

Carlos Eduardo Garcia,
katrading@br2001.com.br

Sorry, but we can't send out betas. Especially to post offices made of shit.

AHH, BLESS 'IM

Hallo. My name is Andrei Fantana, and I am the editor of the *Game Over* magazine Romania, the best game mag around (is not me who says that). What about this SOS? By different reasons, I and none of us (the *Game Over* mag) can't make it to the E3. I have been at the ECTS in autumn, and it was a great thing already. I will probably make it this year too. But Atlanta seems too far for my publisher and too expensive. Please, allow the people who

goes for you at E3 to become a sort of correspondent for us.

We really need something from there to keep up with the market here. In this case, if someone could just take some press packs and send it to us. The press pack from the companies will come with a too big delay if they come. It usually happens this way. Now that you know my BIG problem, and if you can figure a way out on any collaboration, please e-mail me. Thank you.

Andrei Fantana
Game Over magazine,
Romania

It's easy to laugh at Andrei's English, but wouldn't it be nice if someone from one of the games companies read this and actually sent the poor bugger a press pack or two? You can contact him by e-mailing **afantana@gameover.kappa.ro**. First PR person to write in and prove they sent him something gets 30 per cent added to the score of their next three releases. Okay?

THE USA CHEWS POLE, BIG TIME

I recently bought a copy of *PC Zone* at a nearby bookstore (I live in South Florida, so I got it a couple of months after U put it out). Overall, your magazine is great, but I really have only one complaint. Would you guys quit being pissy 'bout

everything American? It kinda sounds like someone over the pond is still a little P'O-ed about the revolutionary war. I mean, it's great that y'all are patriotic, but so are we. You never see an American PC magazine talk about the smug British, or insulting the British people as a whole, in the way your magazine insulted the Americans in the *Redneck Rampage* article, which said most of the American populace are inbred and stupid drooling hicks. Other than that, your magazine is great.

Wolvie via e-mail

They just don't get it, do they? Listen up, *Wolvie*: why are all the villains in Hollywood movies (ie *Die Hard* 1 & 3, *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves*, *JFK*, *Fifth Element*, *Star Wars*, *Silence Of The Lambs*, etc) played by English actors? You obviously hate us, so we're only getting our own back.

[Note to American readers: this is ironic English humour, and should not be interpreted as a gross national slur.]

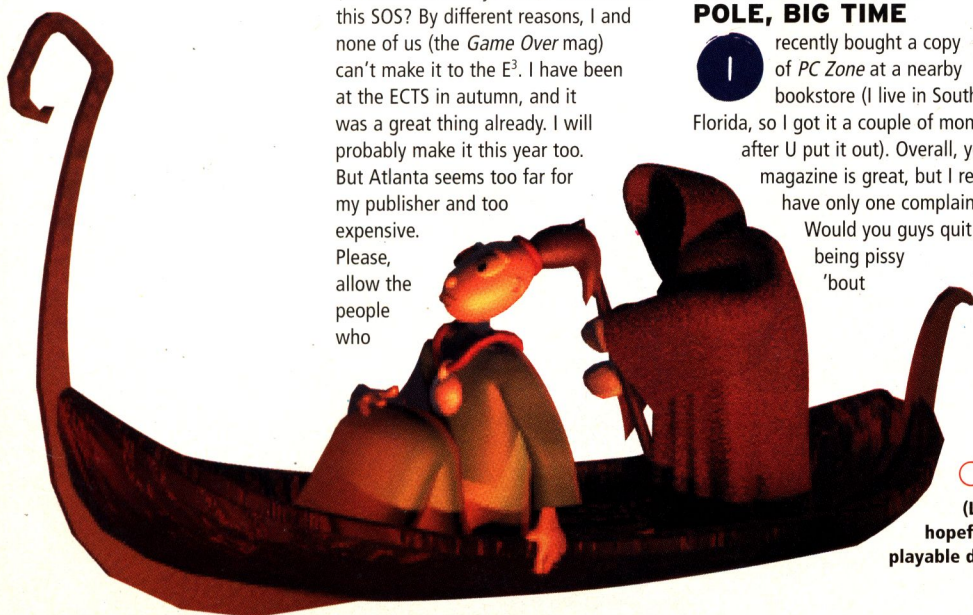
WORLD OF FISTS

Both me and a friend have a copy of the Mystique version of *Destruction Derby 2* and have noticed a multi-play button on the main menu. We've not been able to try this yet as my friend's machine does not have a network card and I haven't yet received my processor upgrade, so I'm not yet able to try it out on mine.

James Thorburn via e-mail

PS Please tell Matthew Hopper of King Arthur's school in Wincanton that he's a pillock 'cause he's a *Tomb Raider*-hating twat and I'm going to beat his egotistical head in.

(Left) But don't despair Carlos, you can hopefully satisfy yourself with the massive playable demo on this month's marvellous **CD Zone**.



It's only in the PS that the true purpose of James's letter reveals itself. If any other readers would like to pick a fight via our pages, write down the name of your victim, together with a brief explanation of exactly how and why you wish to do them harm. Mark your envelopes "That's Fighting Talk Where I Come From" and send them to the usual address. And we'll completely ignore them. But to answer your question, DD2 was supposed to have a multi-play feature, but they decided to leave it out at the last minute. There was talk of a patch to remedy the matter, but we ain't seen nuffink yet and the game is now quite ancient. Try pestering Psynosis on 0151 282 3000 for an official explanation.

HELLO SAILOR

Charlie Brooker gives off the impression he is gay. Please do something about this, such as plucking out his pubic hairs one by one.

Martin via e-mail

Charlie is indeed a very happy chappy. Well, he smiles a lot anyway.

LIKE, DUHHH

What does the 'Z' mean at the end of every review, preview, feature etc? I've always wondered that.

David via e-mail

It's a handy marker to let you know when to stop reading, so your eyes won't slip off the bottom of the page and roll backwards through 180 degrees in their sockets, leaving you staring directly into the shadowy depths of your own mind.

THUNDER IN PARADISE

This e-mail is winging its way all the way from Cyprus. You may think it's fun out here, with fags being cheap (80p for 20 B&H), beer being cheap (40p for Carlsberg Ice), and all the beaches being filled with Scandinavians with their tits out. That's all true, but try playing *Quake* over the Net. I've run *QuakeSpy* 5.2 so many times it's untrue, but can I get a ping below 350? Can I bollocks. Most servers are up in the high 400 range, which means mucho death for me playing against guys with times down as low as 80! So the moral is: if you're

Letter of the Month

HE'S HAVING A POP

Could it be? Could the *PC Zone* staff be in danger of disappearing up their own arses? Quite possibly. And it'd be a shame. Just because you've tickled the funny bone of many a sad bastard like myself doesn't mean we'll still be here when you launch broadside after broadside at your readership. Sure, the mag is funny, but people do buy it for games advice – not to be insulted on the Letters page when they can be bothered to write in. I don't know any of the peeps invoking the wrath of the staff this month, so I've got no 'personal' axe to grind. I just feel you went a bit too far. Call me a prick in your mag if you want – it's just a personal opinion. But then, you can edit any controversial bits out, and crawl further up your own back passages.

Paul Taylor via e-mail

Yes, but your letter is unusual Paul, in that you have a genuine point to make, and you've made it well. Do bear in mind that most of the letters and e-mails we receive are either ranting whinges, embarrassingly inept attempts at 'humour', out-and-out swearword festivals, or "when is such-and-such a game coming out" bore-a-thons. In fact, recently someone took the convention of sending us crap letters to its logical conclusion and posted a lump of actual shit to our offices. Is it any wonder we sometimes appear a little hostile?

Maybe we have gone a little over the top in the past, but we were only having a bit of laugh. And besides, we believe the majority of our readers can handle a bit of gentle ribbing. On a more serious note, please bear in mind that the Letters pages are largely in the hands of the readers. They exist within the magazine as a device to allow you, the reader, to voice your opinions and for us to act as a kind of answering service. If you have any kind of query about a game, or you just want to tell other readers something, then please write in. Similarly, if there's something bugging you, a subject you'd like us to cover in the mag, or you just feel like a bit of a whinge and want to get something off your chest, drop us a line. We wait with bated breath and smiles on our faces.

feeling pissed off with the weather, fire up a Net game of *Quake* and look for some poor sap trying to play with a ping of 400+. It'll be me. Sun-tanned, pissed and chain-smoking, but getting whupped all the same.

Paul Jones via e-mail

Yeah, but if you fancy a bit of genuine, real-life 'blazing gun' action, you could always try barging through the Turkish-Cypriot border and into the northern part of the island without being captured by soldiers. A ridiculous ping rate would then be the least of your worries.

THE MIGHTY WAH

In the *Interstate 76* review, Duncan McDonald asked: "I wonder what make the wah-wah pedal is? A really old Colorsound one, maybe?"

It was a good ol' Cry Baby Wah with a Big Muff Distortion box running into a Fender Amp. I only remember because the Big Muff was my first distortion box, given to me by a friend when I bought my first guitar. Hey, pretend like ya care.

Anyway, I hope you someday get to play *Interstate 76* on a faster computer because it's really quite a bit more fun. Sorry you had to play it

on a lower-end machine. If you have a 3Dfx card, check out the Direct3D 176 patch that will be out VERY SOON... you'll eat those remarks about choppiness for breakfast! Wacka Wacka...

Kurt Arnlund, programmer, Activision Studios, LA

Huh huh huhuh huh huhuh huh. He said 'Big Muff'. Huh huh huh huhuh huh.

SOCIOPATH CORNER

I think *Carmageddon* is the best thing that's happened to the gaming industry since we invented sex. It is so cool to smash everything and wreak havoc on people. I just regret that there aren't any kids we can run over. Wouldn't it be cool if you came roaring down a road at 150mph and splashed through a bunch of kids on their way to school? We also need people in wheelchairs, people on bikes and people on in-line skates. We need more violence. If there is one thing we can't get enough of in games, it's sure to be violence.

An aggressive Viking via e-mail

You are quite genuinely terrifying. I take it you are not a parent, either.

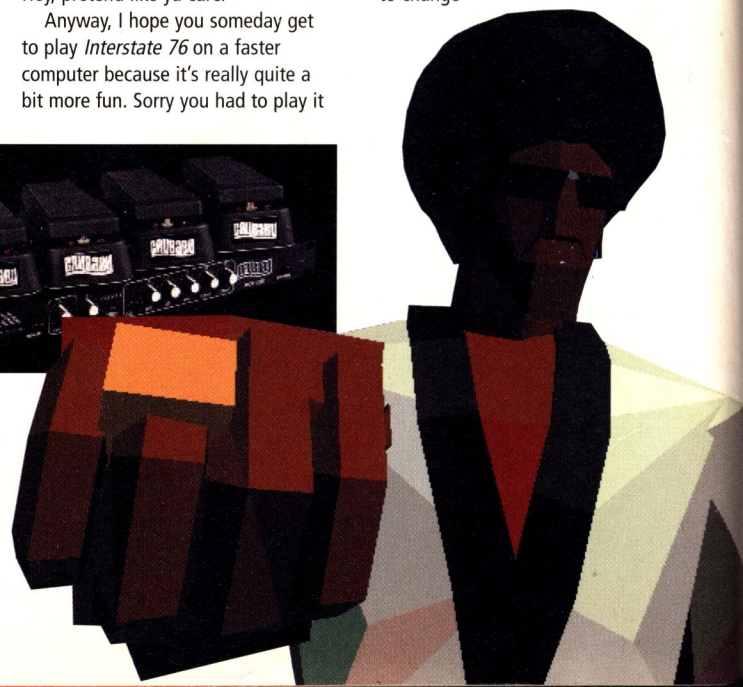
MOVIES, GAMES AND IMBECILES

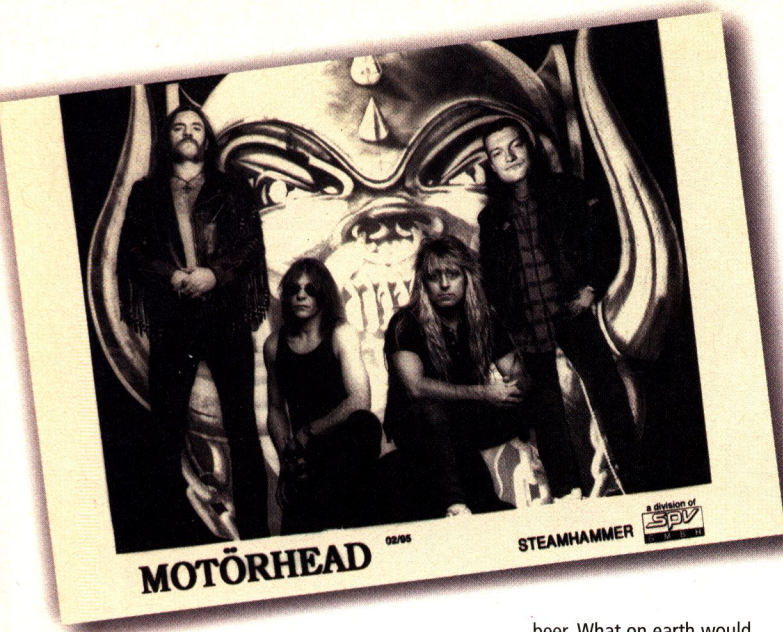
After reading *PC Zone* from cover to cover – which is a damn sight more interesting than GCSE revision, I can tell you – I found myself feeling not in the slightest bit sorry for you. You whinged about Mr Movies, Games And Videos' verbal diarrhoea, but (get the violins out and be prepared to feel even sorrier for me) this bloke has actually managed to get himself on to my local radio station!

It's torture, and don't tell me to change



Blimey! We ask a question and somebody, somewhere, knows the answer. So tell us this, who's the chap who says "...and I was very, very drunk" in *The Fast Show*?





(Left) Charlie Brooker (far right) in his Motorhead days. He doesn't really like to talk about it (much), but that's mainly due to the mullet he sported back then.

stations – I'm a student and that would be waaaay too much of a strain. I have his e-mail address if you want it. You can send him hate mail. But do it soon or I may cause myself serious damage by either ramming cotton wool too far down my ears or by straining myself in an attempt to reach the tuning dial.

Batgirl via e-mail

B atgirl did indeed provide us with Steve 'Movies, Games And Videos' Priestly's e-mail address. If anyone wants us to pass a message on to him, we'd be happy to oblige. Especially if you include a phrase which rhymes with "you plodding josses" somewhere in the text.

WE CANNOT NOT DO WITHOUT SOME POO

W ithout shite games:
(a) 'Good' games would never exist as there wouldn't be a reference point.
(b) What could we deride over a few beers with the lads when we load up another crap demo from your mag?
(c) Occasionally they have some good bits which can be ripped off and incorporated into 'good games'.
(d) If all games were good, we'd never need to read some of the drivel written in mags to attempt to weed through the sludge on the market. Which would of course put you out of business.

Mike via e-mail

S o I guess as far as you're concerned, the glass of water is half-full, eh Mike?

ENOUGH OF THE LAD THING, ALREADY

I t bugs me somewhat how all of you constantly take it upon yourselves to assure readers that you *do* go to the pub, are allowed to drink, and are not just overpaid university geeks who sit around playing games all day and feel really hard when you buy

beer. What on earth would mother say? Get a grip!
Eoin O'Callaghan via e-mail

W e're not ashamed of our sensitive sides, you know. Jeremy paints watercolours of thatched cottages and windmills. Chris is the founding member of a contemporary dance troupe. Patrick rescues seabirds from oil-stricken beaches, then nurses them back to health. Duncan edits International Poetry Review. Paul Mallinson grows flowers, Paul Presley presses them, and Paul Ditta frames the results and hangs them on the wall in his study. John plays the lute. Macca sings lullabies to lonely sailors. And new boy Steve has a large collection of stitched-satin Pierrot clown dolls.

Me, I used to roadie for Motorhead. But that's another story.

AN AMAZING COINCIDENCE

I n the special Star Wars supplement that came with issue 50 there was a section about the forthcoming *Star Wars: Supremacy*. You mentioned that the game was almost unique in the way you have to control whole planet resources in order to battle against your enemies. As far as I can tell from your description of the gameplay, it's actually very similar to a game published in 1990 by Virgin. This game's title was ALSO *Supremacy*. What an amazing coincidence.

Incidentally, you may be interested to know that when I e-mailed Virgin, an automated reply system completely denied its existence.

Andrew W Bellenie via e-mail

I think you're getting a little confused with *Ascendancy*, a space strategy game that was released by Virgin about a year ago. Don't worry, it's not the same game, although developers The Logic Factory are working on a sequel (check out our preview on page 24). *Star Wars: Supremacy* is known as *Star Wars: Rebellion in the US*, but due to copyright problems they've had to change the title to *Supremacy in the UK*.

COME FLY WITH ME

H i guys, (I presume u mostly are!?)

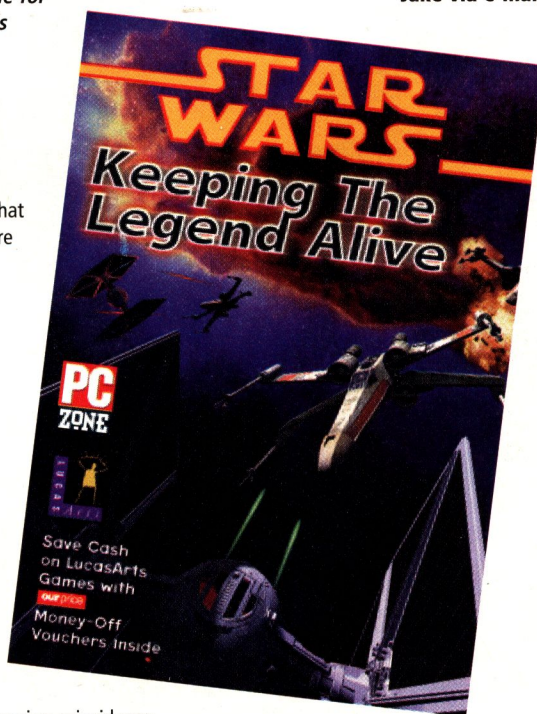
Steve via e-mail

Y ou presume correct Quentard. Oh, and we'll make sure we let you know if we ever touch down on terra firma.

QUENTIN

I saw that Duncan MacDonald of yours at a trade show once, and he's very tall. And his reviews are better than Simon Bradley's. That's it.
Love (?)

Jake via e-mail

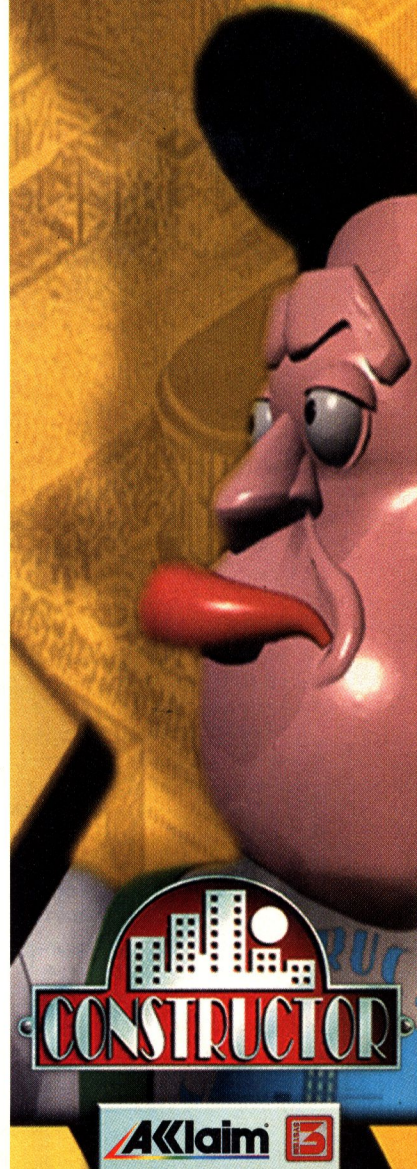


We checked the Net, went through our databases and wracked our brains. But no one could remember *Supremacy*. Can anyone else?

MORTAR COMBAT

You what? Ooh, no, the only game I know's the building game. Not much call for computers round here. Unique cinematic interface? More than my job's worth, matey. Build you an entire city by Monday? Righto!

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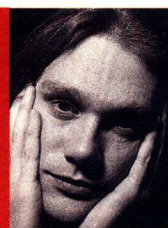


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Comment



Jeremy Wells believes you should definitely ask Santa for a 3D accelerator card this Christmas.

3DFX STORMS E³



WALKING ROUND the E³ show in Atlanta last month, the Zone posse were

all struck by just how good games looked on the PC.

Last year, everyone was gawping at the new stuff on the Ultra64, PlayStation and even on the Saturn. But as far as graphics were concerned, the poor old PC seemed to be struggling.

Admittedly, this was never a major

mates. Sure, they can indulge in platform games and even *Tomb Raider* if they so desire, but unlike PlayStation owners, they can also play *C&C: Red Alert*, *X-COM 3*, *Championship Manager 2*, *Dungeon Keeper* and *SimCity 2000* if they feel so inclined.

But this year, if you happened to see slaving show-goers with their eyes popping out of their heads, you could pretty much assume that they were feasting their retinas on a forthcoming PC release (or, if they were

PC. But one thing's for certain – on the evidence of the hundreds of games on show at E³, when it comes to original, very playable games with fast and fancy graphics, the PC is now King.

The most common question asked by the horde of journalists at the show went something along the lines of "...and this is 3D accelerated, yeah?" To which the standard reply was:

"Uh-huh. We're supporting 3Dfx, D3D and we'll be supporting other cards as

and when we feel confident there's a market for our product."

Other cards are also being supported and some developers are holding out for a miracle cure in DirectX5, but if you want to play the best versions of *Quake 2*,

Hexen 2, *Tomb Raider 2*, *Prey*, *Falcon 4.0* and just about everything else that looks fab, there's no way round it – you'll simply have to buy a 3Dfx card. Fortunately, most developers

are still aiming to release software-only versions of their games. ION Storm didn't have an accelerated version of *Daikatana* on show (although the final release will support 3Dfx) and it still looked pretty special – but obviously not as graphically impressive as the 3Dfx version of *Quake 2*, which iD were demonstrating at the Activision stand.

Even more encouraging though was the fact that *Hexen 2* still looked pretty damn marvellous when it was running under software only. It's a sign that maybe developers are discovering new techniques through working with new hardware and trying to emulate them.

It's safe to say that you can usually predict what'll be big around Christmas by what you see at E³ in June. Last year, thanks to the success of *Tomb Raider* and *C&C*, it was clear that we would have a myriad of real-time strategy games and third-person perspective adventures to look forward to. So far this year, almost every publisher has

"Shiny's Messiah proves that in the right hands, the new 3D hardware can work miracles on your PC."



worry. The games people play on the PC have always been more diverse, complex and compelling than the stuff you get on consoles. PC gamers own PCs for the simple reason that they want to play flight sims, strategy games, RPGs, adventure games, *Quake*, surf the Net and send dirty e-mails to their

on the Eidos stand, one of the *Fighting Force* girls). Virtually every game on show was accelerated, and in most instances the lush graphics were not down to clever programming, but rather a 3Dfx card tucked inside the



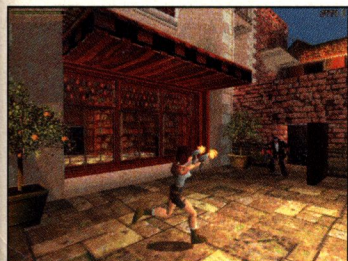
Well, you would, wouldn't you?

released at least one *C&C* clone, and most of them also have a *Tomb Raider*-style game coming out in time for those Christmas stockings.

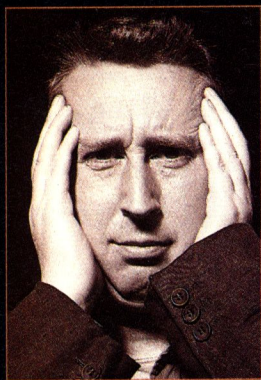
Thankfully, there were a few games doing the rounds that could justifiably be termed 'original', such as *Tanktics* and *Grand Theft Auto* from Scottish developers DMA and *Messiah* from Laguna-based Shiny. *Messiah* proves that in the right hands, the new 3D hardware can work miracles on your PC, while the non-accelerated *Tanktics* shows that 3D accelerators are prompting developers to investigate emulating new 3D effects in software.

So is the 3D accelerator revolution inspiring greater originality in games? Well, yes. And no. The rest of the games at E³ weren't exactly genre-busting – they just looked better because they were accelerated. There are plenty of nice-looking flight sims on the way (notably from Eidos, MicroProse and DID) and an abundance of racing games all due for release this winter. First-person shoot 'em ups also appear to be enjoying a new lease of life, thanks to iD and Epic licensing their *Quake* and UNREAL engines to any publisher who'll cough up the readies.

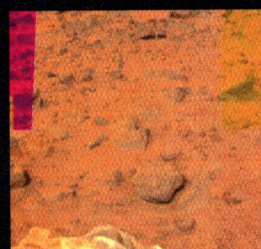
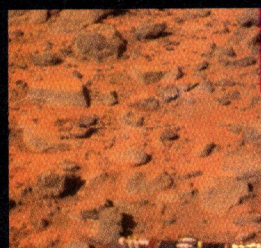
Come Christmas, it looks as though everyone will be playing super-looking flight sims, racing games and *Quake* clones – as well as a couple of highly original titles. As long as they've got a 3Dfx card, that is. **Z**



(Clockwise from top left) *Messiah*, *Quake 2*, *Tomb Raider 2* and *Tanktics*. The 3Dfx revolution is here and it's good and bad news.



He's afraid of... Mars



All together now...
"Roll me over,
Martian Rover..."
Tsk! Tsk!

Mr Cursor



BEFORE GETTING ON TO THE MAIN SUBJECT, I just want to share something with you. It's something I saw literally 30 minutes ago, during my cycle ride into the office. I'd reached Trafalgar Square, was about to bunny-hop up on to the pavement (a handy cyclists' shortcut to Charing Cross Road, providing there aren't any coppers about) when my chain came off, leaving me no alternative but to dismount. This amused a gaggle of goofy-toothed preppy American tourist girls no end, one of whom happened to be in the middle of necking a thick banana milkshake. Ha ha! The joke was now on her. One of her guffaws caused the banana milkshake in her mouth to re-route up through her sinuses and spurt out in a jet through her nose. It looked like custard. This made her gag, and then she vomited on the lap and arm of the girl sitting next to her. Excellent.

But anyway, on to matters beyond this particular planet.

Okay, it probably hasn't passed you by that there's been a little automated 'rover' chugging about on the surface of Mars for the last month or so. It's a bit on the crap side, seeing as it can only manage about a centimetre per minute, but the NASA scientists are nevertheless overjoyed. And good for them. Hip, hip, hooray.

But I know something they don't, and I'm about to share it with you.

One can be zeros

Let me take you back about two years. I was round a chum's place, who we'll call 'Bob'. We were in his study and he was tapping away on his PC keyboard, putting the finishing touches to a program he'd written. It looked pretty complicated, and he asked me to keep quiet while he finished up. Naturally, I acquiesced, staring in fascination at the monitor as Bob typed in bunches of zeros and ones. Blimey – he was writing pure machine code. I knew this program was something he'd brought back from work, and that it was meant to be a bit 'secret', so I sat in silence, quite impressed, for about 15 minutes.

"There we go," said Bob suddenly, clicking the Enter key and leaning back on his chair, stretching his arms.

"You've finished, then?" I said.

"Yup," he said. "I'll just go and have a crap and then we can load up *Civilization*."

With this he left the room. He also left his program on-screen.

"Don't touch it, don't touch it," I was telling myself.

But of course I did touch it. I began by simply scrolling through the thing, and soon discovered the basic format of his program, which was PROC-THIS followed by a zillion ones and zeros, then PROC-THAT followed by another zillion ones and zeros, and on and on. I assumed the prefix PROC stood for PROCEDURE, and that the suffix – whether it be THIS, THAT or THE OTHER – was the actual name of the procedure.

A series of loud, raspy farting noises echoed through from the direction of Bob's toilet. It sounded like he was going to be quite a while.

Great.

Back to now

August 1997. The Pathfinder mission is AOK. Except it isn't. It's actually booby-trapped. Bob's complicated program, as I discovered later (and as you'll probably have guessed by now), was for NASA, and is now etched in ROM on silicon chips... both in the main Martian lander and in the little rover vehicle.

For instance, do you remember when the probe originally landed,

and how one of the airbags didn't deflate properly? That was down to me, I'd say. It must have had something to do with PROC-D-FLATE in Bob's program – a procedure from which I deleted two ones and a zero. The NASA bods got round that little problem by beaming up another program from Earth, but I wonder what'll happen when either the rover or the mother vehicle try to access PROC-BURL? Now I can't even *begin* to imagine what PROC-BURL is meant to do, but I *do* know that I deleted a whole line of zeros from the first line and added 38 ones at the end. That's sure to put the cat among the pigeons. And as for PROC-SELFRIGHT, which I reckon is going to be the part of the program that helps the rover to right itself after falling over, well... it's going to be a bit fucked if it does fall over, because I inserted the number '9' right slap bang in the middle of the code. Ho ho.

Mr Cursor departs

We're nearing the bottom of the page, and it's time for me to say "bye bye". I've been knocking out this column every month since issue one and it's finally got a bit 'tired', so I've decided to depart for warmer climes. Literally. Have you ever heard of Pitcairn Island? Nobody could blame you if you haven't, so I'll tell you about it.

"Bob's complicated program was for NASA, for the main Martian lander and the little rover vehicle."

You know the story of the *Mutiny On The Bounty*, and Fletcher Christian and all that? Well, Pitcairn Island is the island where he and his mutineering chums ended up. It's about two miles long, one mile wide and, most importantly, it's a British Dependant Territory, meaning any British passport-holding citizen can go and live there without green cards, visas and stuff. And, better than that, seeing as there aren't any jobs on Pitcairn, you can sign on the dole without any hassle from the Job Search people. So that's where I'm off to. Pitcairn! An idyllic South Sea island, full of coconut trees and the like, where I'll be paid 50 quid a week to doss about on the beach in the sun, shagging countless beautiful Polynesian girls. Mind you, having said that bit about the countless beautiful Polynesian girls, the population of Pitcairn Island is actually only 55... and the chances are they'll all be pretty much in-bred. So maybe it'll all end in tears. Who can tell? There's no way of knowing till I get there, so I'll send a postcard to update you. (I don't think you can buy postcards on Pitcairn – Ed).



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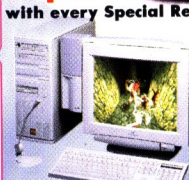
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